

Abraham Lincoln: In His Own Words

Part I

Professor David Zarefsky



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David Zarefsky, Ph.D.

Northwestern University

David Zarefsky received his B.S. (With Highest Distinction) from Northwestern University, and earned his master's and doctorate degrees also from Northwestern. He has taught at Northwestern for over thirty years and has been the Dean of the School of Speech since 1988.

Dr. Zarefsky has served as President of the National Communication Association (NCA), one of the nation's oldest and largest professional organizations for scholars, teachers, and practitioners in communication and performance studies.

A prolific writer, Dr. Zarefsky has authored five books and edited three more and has an impressive list of scholarly articles and reviews to his credit. He received the 1986 NCA Winans-Wichelns Award in Distinguished Scholarship in Rhetoric and Public Address for his book *President Johnson's War on Poverty: Rhetoric and History* and the same award again in 1991 for *Lincoln, Douglas and Slavery: In the Crucible of Public Debate*. He is one of only two people to have received this prestigious award twice.

A nationally recognized authority on rhetoric and forensics, Dr. Zarefsky maintains a busy schedule as a member of external review committees for departments of speech communication or communications studies at various universities. He is a member of the national advisory board and steering committee of the Center of Presidential Studies established at Texas A & M University in conjunction with the George Bush Presidential Library.

Dr. Zarefsky has been elected to the Northwestern University's Associated Student Government Honor Roll for Teaching on twelve occasions.

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Abraham Lincoln: In His Own Words

Scope:

This series of twenty-four lectures examines the rhetoric of Abraham Lincoln—the public messages in which Lincoln evolved his views on slavery and the Union and by which he sought to persuade others. Rhetoric is the study of the available means of persuasion in a given case. By tracing significant moments in Lincoln's career from the standpoint of public persuasion, we will explore how Lincoln navigated the constraints posed by his audiences and situations and how he took advantage of creative opportunities.

The first lecture introduces the nature of rhetoric and the contributions of a rhetorical perspective to the study of Abraham Lincoln. It then reviews the basic details of Lincoln's biography. Lectures Two through Four examine cases of Lincoln's early speaking, before the slavery issue called him fairly steadily to the public forum. Lecture Two considers one of Lincoln's earliest speeches, his 1838 address to the Young Men's Lyceum of Springfield. It explores the political responsibility of the current generation to the founders, and it can be read on multiple levels. So can the 1842 speech to the Washington Temperance Society of Springfield, which is the subject of Lecture Three. This speech can be seen as a speech about drunkenness, or about the place of moderation in Lincoln's political philosophy, or about Lincoln's approach to persuasion in general. Finally, Lecture Four addresses two Lincoln speeches—one in Congress, in opposition to the Mexican War, and one a eulogy for Henry Clay. These two speeches show Lincoln's advocacy as a young but devoted Whig.

The next four lectures—Lectures Five through Eight—focus on Lincoln's public advocacy after the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854 brought him from private life back into the public forum. Lincoln especially was concerned that this act reversed the historical presumption that slavery eventually must die. Lecture Five surveys the background of the Compromise of 1850, the Kansas-Nebraska Act, and the controversy surrounding the Lecompton constitution in Kansas. Then Lecture Six concentrates on Lincoln's 1854 Peoria speech, the most complete early exposition of his beliefs about slavery and the Union. Lecture Seven traces evolutions in Lincoln's beliefs in letters and speeches during 1855 and 1856 and explains how the *Dred Scott* decision of 1857 created rhetorical problems not only for Lincoln but also for Stephen A. Douglas. Lincoln's initial response to the *Dred Scott* decision was a speech he delivered in June of 1857, which is the central concern of Lecture Eight.

The next group of lectures, Nine through Sixteen, follows Lincoln through the year 1858, the most critical year both for the evolution of his political position and his search for a rhetorical voice in which to embody it. Lecture Nine addresses the "House Divided" speech and explains that it was not meant as a forecast of civil war but as a prediction that the country was moving toward national slavery. Senator Douglas responded to that speech on July 9 and Lincoln answered him on July 10, in a speech that is a focal point of Lecture Ten. The two candidates then traveled downstate. Douglas spoke at Bloomington on July 16; Lincoln was present and followed Douglas to Springfield on the 17th, when he responded to the speech Douglas had given in Bloomington. This Springfield speech is the topic of Lecture Eleven. Lincoln was beginning to be ridiculed for depending on Douglas to attract his crowds. He therefore decided to challenge Douglas to a series of debates, and Lecture Twelve describes the resulting "debate about the debates."

Lectures Thirteen through Sixteen follow the seven debates, with special attention to Lincoln's choices of arguments and of persuasive strategies and tactics. The lectures suggest that, while Douglas maintained the same very basic position throughout the debates, Lincoln's position evolved and he captured the momentum. Nevertheless, Douglas won the election, at least in part by convincing listeners that Lincoln was a dangerous radical. Although the central issue was the morality of permitting slavery to spread to the territories, little of the debate time focused on that. Instead the debates are made up of a variety of conspiracy, legal, and historical arguments.

The next three lectures, Seventeen through Nineteen, trace the path between the debates and the presidency. Lecture Seventeen explores Lincoln's speaking during 1859, both a lecture he had developed on "Discoveries and Inventions" and speeches he gave while on tour in Ohio. The 1860 address at Cooper Union, which Lincoln reportedly said is what made him president, will receive special attention in Lecture Eighteen. During the campaign itself, Lincoln made almost no formal speeches, referring questioners to his earlier speeches and to the debates with Douglas. En route to Washington, however, he made a number of short speeches, some of which were ceremonial, that hinted at the policy he would follow.

The final lectures, Twenty through Twenty-Four, are devoted to Lincoln's presidential rhetoric. Lecture Twenty is concerned with Lincoln's First Inaugural Address, in which he defined the North as being defensive and reactive. In Lecture Twenty-One, the focus shifts to the ways in which Lincoln's July 1861 address to a joint session of Congress frames the conflict as one instigated by rebellious Southerners rather than one grounded in constitutional principle. As the war went on, many people's sense of the war's aims became more radicalized; larger aims would help to justify the terrible sacrifice they already had endured. During 1862, Lincoln moved gingerly toward abolition while still publicly supporting colonization as his preferred solution. In Lecture Twenty-Two, this move will be traced through a series of letters and documents. Finally, Lecture Twenty-Three will consider Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, and Lecture Twenty-Four will examine the Second Inaugural Address as well as Lincoln's last speech.

This series of lectures should shed new light on Abraham Lincoln by employing a rhetorical lens. They also should reveal how heavily Lincoln's public career developed through public speeches and writings. And they should remind us of the importance of thinking rhetorically, reasoning with specific audiences and situations in mind.

Lecture One

Lincoln and Rhetoric

Scope: In this lecture, we will review Lincoln's basic biography and introduce a rhetorical perspective to the study of his career. A rhetorical perspective focuses especially on Lincoln's use of public persuasion to create a sense of community with his audience and to influence his listeners in order to achieve his goals. Lincoln's speaking career began as a young man in Springfield and continued until his death. We will review the major phases and highlights of that career.

Outline

- I. Popular understanding of Lincoln is significantly incomplete, despite the fact that he has been studied more than any other American president and perhaps any public figure in U.S. history.
 - A. We "know" several things about Lincoln that are not true.
 - 1. The Emancipation Proclamation did not free all the slaves.
 - 2. Lincoln did not debate Douglas while the two men were running for President in 1860.
 - 3. Lincoln did not write the Gettysburg Address on the back of an envelope.
 - 4. The "House Divided" speech (1858) did not forecast the Civil War.
 - B. We "don't know" several things about Lincoln that are true.
 - 1. As a lawyer, he defended slaveowners seeking to reclaim fugitive slaves.
 - 2. He publicly stated that the white and black races could not coexist on an equal basis and that whites should occupy the superior position.
 - 3. He favored returning blacks to Africa as the best solution to the slavery problem.
 - 4. He was willing (even after becoming president) to support a constitutional amendment that would guarantee the perpetuation of slavery in the South.
 - C. Lincoln is a much more complex figure than most Americans understand.
- II. Our knowledge of Lincoln is dominated by the later years of his presidency and by his death.
 - A. His most famous statements were delivered in the last years of his life. In particular, he is remembered for:
 - 1. The First Inaugural Address
 - 2. The Gettysburg Address
 - 3. The Second Inaugural Address.
 - B. Lincoln was deified following his assassination.
 - C. The effect is to remove the complexity of Lincoln's thought from our understanding. Looking at him in his own words is the best way to understand him.
 - 1. Lincoln was a skillful politician, in the best sense of the term. He knew how to use the political machinery to attain his ends.
 - 2. He also was a skilled rhetor and his political craft is evident in his words.
- III. To appreciate Lincoln's rhetoric, we must understand "rhetoric" appropriately.
 - A. We must discard some popular stereotypes of "rhetoric."
 - 1. It is not bombastic or empty expression.
 - 2. It is not a mask that conceals reality.
 - B. According to Aristotle's definition, rhetoric is the study of the available means of persuasion in a given case.
 - C. These means can be inferred from the relationship between texts (the actual words of the speech) and contexts (the occasion or circumstances in which the speech was given). There are two main sources for Lincoln's speeches:
 - 1. An abridged eight-volume work edited by R. Basler
 - 2. A two-volume collection.
 - D. Understanding the context of a political speech includes several dimensions.
 - 1. We must know the state of public opinion at the time of the speech.

2. We must know the party affiliation and position on the issues of the speaker.
- E. Understanding the text requires that we determine what the speaker is doing in the choices of arguments, words, structure, imagery, and style to respond to the situation.
- F. Lincoln's early speeches show immaturity compared to his later speeches, but they also prefigure the direction in which he was headed.

IV. The basic biographical details of Lincoln's life warrant brief review.

- A. He was born in Kentucky in 1809. His family moved to Indiana.
- B. In his twenties, he moved to Illinois and ran a grocery (euphemism for tavern) in New Salem. This business failed and he moved to Springfield.
- C. His early years were marked by local concerns.
 1. He was involved with efforts to move the state capital to Springfield.
 2. He was in favor of public spending for "internal improvements" (i.e., canals, roads, etc.).
- D. Lincoln's political philosophy aligned him with the Whig Party, which opposed Andrew Jackson and the Democratic Party.
 1. He stressed the role of law as a source of moral guidance.
 2. He ran for election to the state legislature in 1832 but lost.
 3. He was elected to the state legislature in 1834 and was reelected three times.
- E. Lincoln served a single term in Congress (1847–1849). This seat was rotated among Whigs from Springfield. His term was characterized by his opposition to the Mexican War (which was generally a popular war with the public).
 1. He argued that it was unconstitutional.
 2. However, he supported appropriations so that the forces were provided for, even though he opposed the war.
- F. He returned to Springfield and an increasingly lucrative law practice until the Kansas-Nebraska Act, authored by Stephen A. Douglas in 1854, called him back into public life. This law destabilized the American political parties then in existence.
 1. He campaigned for "anti-Nebraska" candidates in 1854.
 2. He was considered for a Senate seat by the Illinois state legislature (there was no popular election of senators at that time). However, the seat went to Lyman Trumbull.
 3. He became a Republican in 1856.
- G. Nominated for senator by the Republicans in 1858, he engaged in debates with Stephen A. Douglas that increased his popularity and recognition within and beyond the state, even though he lost the election.
- H. He was elected President in a four-way race in 1860, with only forty percent of the popular vote but a majority of electoral votes.

Essential Reading:

Don E. Fehrenbacher, *Lincoln in Text and Context*, chapters 8, 19.

Supplementary Reading:

Allan Nevins, *The Emergence of Lincoln*, pp. 352–359.

Don E. Fehrenbacher, *The Dred Scott Case*, chapter 2.

Questions to Consider:

1. How does the popular understanding of Abraham Lincoln distort the historical record?
2. What special kinds of insight into Abraham Lincoln's career can the perspective of rhetoric provide?

Lecture Two

The Lyceum Speech, 1838

Scope: Lincoln's first major public address was delivered at the age of twenty-nine to the Young Men's Lyceum of Springfield, Illinois. Its theme is the danger posed by lawlessness to the survival of American political institutions. Although delivered in the aftermath of the murder of abolitionist editor Elijah Lovejoy in Alton, the speech does not mention the attack on Lovejoy but refers instead to other examples of lawless behavior. In this speech Lincoln previews much of his later political philosophy and raises questions about the relationship between the current generation and the Founding Fathers.

Outline

- I. To approach the Lyceum speech, we should understand the background context.
 - A. The Lyceum movement spread across the country in the 1820's and 1830's.
 - 1. It was an educational and social movement involving speeches, readings, and panel discussions on leading issues of the day.
 - 2. It became a dominant means of adult education and entertainment in the early nineteenth century.
 - B. The Springfield Lyceum was one of the town's leading attractions and social center.
 - C. This was Lincoln's first major political speech.
 - D. Just prior to the speech, abolitionist editor Elijah Lovejoy had been murdered at Alton, in southern Illinois, and his printing press was thrown into the river.
 - 1. At that time, abolitionists were not in the mainstream of popular sentiment.
 - 2. Lovejoy died at the hands of a mob.
- II. The Lyceum speech concerns the perpetuation of American political institutions. It develops a complex line of argument and foreshadows the mature Lincoln.
 - A. The overall issue is how we can assure the survival of our political institutions and thereby fulfill our duty to the Founding Fathers.
 - 1. Most of those who heard him speak were only two generations removed from the American Revolution.
 - 2. Lincoln stressed that his listeners had received a great inheritance.
 - B. The threat (to American institutions) is more likely to be internal rather than external.
 - 1. No other nation can threaten us by invasion.
 - 2. The domestic danger is disregard for laws.
 - C. Examples can be found of the tendency to substitute passionate mobs for courts of justice across the country.
 - 1. There had been a wave of hangings in Mississippi that Lincoln described in a somewhat overblown style.
 - 2. A free mulatto man was burned alive in St. Louis.
 - 3. Of note, Lincoln did not directly mention Lovejoy's murder, but he did make an oblique reference about "throwing printing presses into the river." This is a method of persuasion in which the speaker uses more distant examples to make his point.
 - D. Lincoln argued that the consequences of these acts are serious, because:
 - 1. They are not limited to the victims.
 - 2. Lawlessness begets more lawlessness and destroys the attachment of the people to their government if they perceive it to be ineffective in enforcing the laws.
 - 3. Ambitious men will take advantage of such detachment and attendant "mobocratic spirit" to overthrow constitutional government and introduce tyranny.
 - E. Lincoln's solution is strict obedience to the laws.
 - 1. This should become the nation's political religion.
 - 2. Even bad laws should be observed until repealed.
 - 3. This reflects the Whig philosophy of orderly process and deference to leadership.

- F. Lincoln, employing the rhetorical technique of “anticipatory refutation,” continues by saying that we should take no satisfaction from the fact that the nation has survived until now.
1. The Founders had high ambitions for glory but, unlike us, had a constructive way in which to satisfy them (i.e., carrying out the revolution).
 2. The American Revolution excited the passions and channeled them against the British and sublimated other passions in a way that is no longer possible.
 3. The law will serve for Lincoln’s generation as the revolution served for the Fathers’ generation.
 4. He appeals to reason in place of passion.

III. The Lyceum speech has been subject to various readings; it is rich in possibilities for various interpretations.

- A. It can be read at face value.
1. It is a plea for the control of violence and mob action.
 2. It is a comment on decline since the time of the Founding Fathers, a theme that Lincoln would use many times in the future.
- B. It can be read psycho-historically.
1. It is a warning against Lincoln’s own ambition.
 2. It is anticipating a role Lincoln might play against demagogues.
- C. It can be read politically.
1. It is a polemic against Andrew Jackson.
 2. It foreshadows Lincoln’s own political values and conduct, especially his belief in moderation and action within the law (in this, we can compare his handling of the slavery issue).

Essential Reading (one of the following):

Roy P. Basler, *Abraham Lincoln: His Speeches and Writings*, pp. 76–85.

Lincoln: Speeches and Writings, v. 1, pp. 28–36.

Supplementary Reading:

Harry V. Jaffa, *Crisis of the House Divided*, chapter 9.

George B. Forgie, *Patricide in the House Divided*, chapter 2.

David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln*, chapter 3.

Questions to Consider:

1. Why did Lincoln regard ambition as a dangerous force? Was he right to do so?
2. Which of the different perspectives for reading the Lyceum speech is the most sensible? Why?

Lecture Three

The Temperance Speech, 1842

Scope: Another early Lincoln speech was delivered to the Washington Temperance Society of Springfield in 1842. Although praising the aims of the temperance movement, Lincoln indicates his preference for moderate rather than radical approaches to this important social reform. The speech can also be read as revealing Lincoln's theories of politics and of rhetoric, foreshadowing how he will oppose slavery without calling for its outright abolition.

Outline

- I. The temperance movement must be set in the context of nineteenth-century social reform.
 - A. Many social movements rose to prominence in the 1830's and 1840's.
 - 1. They reflected a belief in human perfectibility attributed to the Second Great Awakening, then centered in Boston.
 - 2. Examples include abolitionism, prison reform, pacifism, dress reform, diet reform, and religious communes.
 - 3. The temperance movement was among the most prominent and influential movements that reflected a shift from colonial-era views on the use of spirits.
 - B. The Washington Temperance Societies represented a shift in the temperance movement.
 - 1. Earlier phases had relied heavily on moral exhortation from clergymen.
 - 2. Leadership in the Washington Temperance Societies was composed of former drunkards who relied for their authority on their own experiences.
 - 3. Naming the society for George Washington was a way of venerating him.
 - 4. The Washington Temperance Society was strong and influential during its heyday.
- II. Lincoln's speech (delivered on Washington's birthday, 1842) presents his views on the nature of temperance. Interestingly, he did not mention George Washington until the end of the speech.
 - A. He enumerates the causes of the temperance movement's past failures to explain the success of the Washington Temperance Society. He also expresses his views on other topics in rhetoric that can be described as youthful, exuberant, and overblown.
 - 1. Leadership was entrusted to the wrong people, namely preachers, lawyers, and "hired agents" who are distant from the people and who had a vested interest in the issue.
 - 2. The measures they supported were not likely to win adherents. Lincoln explores the reasons why, thereby touching on human nature.
 - 3. The speakers of the other movements denounced the failure of their listeners (impolitic) and they failed to account for public opinion (unjust).
 - 4. In their approach, there is an assumption that the drunkard is incorrigible. Lincoln, holding the opposite view, shows us his optimism that people can change.
 - B. He explains the success of the Washington Society by comparing it to other temperance approaches. One main reason he adduces is the use of reformed drunkards who can relate to the audience.
 - C. Why should people who are not drunkards take a temperance pledge?
 - 1. He argues that joining provides social support for, and "peer pressure" on, the drinker.
 - 2. He addresses the idea of moral influence via the "influence of fashion."
 - 3. He invokes religious imagery (and a quote from Ezekial) to strengthen his case.
 - D. He enumerates the benefits of temperance, which he defines as the elimination of passion.
 - 1. He likens the temperance movement to the Revolution of 1776.
 - 2. He uses the idea, or image, of slavery (to alcohol).
 - 3. He broadens the idea of temperance to the promotion of political freedom through reason.
 - 4. He concludes his speech with a mention of George Washington.
- III. The Temperance Society speech can be understood on several different levels.
 - A. It can be understood at face value. Lincoln himself was a temperate man.

- B. It can be understood as satire regarding moral reformers.
- C. It can be understood as prefiguring Lincoln's views on slavery.
 - 1. It suggests that Lincoln opposed slavery but not slaveholders.
 - 2. It suggests that he would oppose extreme measures such as abolition.
 - 3. It suggests that he believed that moderate measures were more likely to succeed.
- D. It can be understood as a metaphor for Lincoln's general theory of persuasion.
 - 1. It emphasizes identification with the audience, not confrontation.
 - 2. It adapts the speaker's position to the audience.
 - 3. It emphasizes practical rather than abstract questions.
 - 4. It favors reason over passion.

Essential Reading (one of the following):

Roy P. Basler, *Abraham Lincoln: His Speeches and Writings*, pp.131–141.

Lincoln: Speeches and Writings, vol. 1, pp. 81–90.

Supplementary Reading:

Harry V. Jaffa, *Crisis of the House Divided*, chapter 10.

Questions to Consider:

- 1. What did Lincoln mean by “temperance”?
- 2. Is a moderate stance more likely to be persuasive, as Lincoln asserts, than an extreme one? Why or why not?

Lecture Four

Lincoln as a Young Whig

Scope: From an early age, Lincoln identified himself with the Whig Party. He served a single term in Congress from 1847 to 1849 and is known chiefly for his opposition to the Mexican War, which was then a popular cause. He claimed to be guided in all his actions by the example of Whig leader Henry Clay. In this lecture we will examine his congressional speaking in opposition to the Mexican War and his eulogy on the death of Henry Clay.

Outline

- I. Lincoln's term in Congress was marked by his opposition to the Mexican War.
 - A. By way of background, in 1845, the United States annexed the Republic of Texas.
 - 1. Texas had extended its territorial claims over lands that Mexico considered its national soil.
 - 2. The area between the Nueces and the Rio Grande rivers was contested.
 - 3. U.S. forces crossed the Nueces and fighting ensued.
 - B. Lincoln did not believe that the war was just.
 - 1. Polk's claim that "American blood has been shed on American soil" was dubious.
 - 2. Lincoln repeatedly introduced "spot" resolutions calling on Polk to appear before Congress and identify the spot of soil.
 - C. Though opposed to Polk, Lincoln supported appropriations for the conduct of the war.
 - D. At the time of Lincoln's speech (January 1848), the war was popular with many Americans.
- II. Lincoln's speech has three main thrusts.
 - A. It is a speech of self-justification.
 - 1. Lincoln is a reluctant advocate of the anti-war minority, but he had to speak out because President Polk and other congressmen forced him to do so.
 - 2. Lincoln has no partisan motive.
 - B. It is a lawyerly speech of refutation. He addresses *seriatim* six points of Polk's position.
 - 1. Lincoln denies that the soil was ours.
 - 2. He denies that the Louisiana Purchase gave Texas to the United States, based on the 1819 treaty with Spain involving Florida's boundaries.
 - 3. He denies that the Texas boundary claims are legitimate.
 - 4. He denies that the "treaty" signed by Santa Anna is valid. It was signed under duress after the Battle of San Jacinto and was really a pledge to cease hostilities against Texas, not a real treaty.
 - 5. He denies that Texas exercises sovereignty over the disputed area by using a clever and amusing analogy.
 - 6. He denies that Congress understood the boundary as lying beyond the Nueces River.
 - C. It is a speech of challenge.
 - 1. He challenges Polk, whom he thinks has been deceptive, to answer the "spot" resolutions. He invokes the memory of George Washington.
 - 2. He suggests that Polk's unwillingness to answer the "spot" resolutions will have unfortunate consequences. For one, Polk would be guilty of waging an unjust war.
 - D. This speech captures the tenor of the Whig opposition to the Mexican War. Lincoln attacks Polk as "bewildered" and "confused."
- III. Lincoln's Whig tradition is clearly illustrated in his eulogy for Henry Clay.
 - A. Clay was venerated by Whig supporters. He was said to have been a type of "Founding Father" for his generation. He was revered as the "Great Compromiser."
 - B. Lincoln's eulogy (6 July 1852) stresses the void created by Clay's death. He embellishes Clay's achievements and claims that he (Clay) is beyond party.

1. He identifies Clay with the nation (because he was born in 1777, only one year after the Declaration of Independence).
 2. He observes that national grief over Clay's death transcends partisanship.
 3. He offers a biographical sketch of Clay, focusing on his meteoric rise to become Speaker of the House in 1812. However, he ignored Clay's role in the presidential election of 1824, when Clay and his supporters gave the presidency to John Quincy Adams who promptly named Clay Secretary of State.
 4. He describes Clay as a national, not a party, man.
 5. He extols Clay's qualities, including his eloquence.
 6. He stresses Clay's role in bringing liberty to South America and Greece, as well as his role in the War of 1812 and in fashioning the Missouri Compromise (1820) and the Compromise of 1850.
 7. He is not sure who can take Clay's place (but he suggests that perhaps he is the one to do it).
- C. Lincoln commends Clay's position on slavery. Clay opposed slavery on principle but owned slaves himself. Lincoln has to put Clay on a middle ground on this issue (where he himself stood).
1. He identifies Clay with the colonization movement even more than with political compromise.
 2. He thereby indicates his own support for colonization as a solution to slavery's dilemmas. Thus, he found a middle ground between abolition and the expansion of slavery.

Essential Reading (one of the following):

Roy P. Basler, *Abraham Lincoln: His Speeches and Writings*, pp. 202–216, 264–278.

Lincoln: Speeches and Writings, vol. 1, pp. 161–171, 259–272.

Supplementary Reading:

Don E. Fehrenbacher, *Lincoln in Text and Context*, chapter 1.

David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln*, chapters 5, 9.

Questions to Consider:

1. Was a speech of refutation the most effective means for Lincoln to indicate his opposition to the Mexican War? Why or why not?
2. Why did Lincoln give more emphasis to Clay's views on colonization than to the series of compromises to which Clay contributed?

Lecture Five

Lincoln Returns to Politics

Scope: Following his one term in Congress, Lincoln retired from politics and returned to Springfield and the practice of law. The passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854 brought him back into politics. This law, by repealing the Missouri Compromise (1820), opened territory that previously was free to the possible spread of slavery. This lecture will review the Missouri Compromise, the Kansas-Nebraska Act controversy, and the way in which this issue rekindled Lincoln's interest in politics.

Outline

- I. The Compromise of 1850 had not settled the complex issue of slavery. A brief review of this follows.
 - A. The Missouri Compromise (1820) allowed Missouri to enter the Union as a slave state.
 - 1. Missouri's entrance was balanced by Maine as a free state.
 - 2. The compromise also prohibited slavery north of 36°30' latitude (the southern boundary of Missouri) in the remaining area of the Louisiana Purchase.
 - 3. The 36°30' line eventually became a "sacred principle" in the North.
 - B. The Mexican War and the addition of new territory renewed the question of the expansion of slavery. Under the terms of the Compromise of 1850:
 - 1. California was admitted as a free state.
 - 2. There were stricter federal fugitive slave laws.
 - 3. The boundaries of Texas were adjusted in return for the United States assuming the debt of Texas.
 - 4. The slave trade was abolished in Washington, DC.
 - 5. The idea of popular sovereignty on the slavery issue was adopted for the new territories obtained from the Mexican War.
 - C. Congressional resolutions and party platforms proclaimed that the Compromise was a final settlement. There was no ambiguity on the surface as to where slavery could and could not exist in the territories.
 - D. But important concerns lay unresolved.
 - 1. Secession movements remained in several southern states (the Compromise of 1850 was prompted by threats of secession).
 - 2. Northerners opposed enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law.
 - 3. Abolitionists returned to the public forum.
 - 4. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) dramatized the plight of the slave.
 - 5. Renewed efforts to expand southward (e.g., to annex Cuba) exposed the limits of Manifest Destiny.
- II. The Kansas-Nebraska Act re-ignited the controversy.
 - A. Senator Stephen A. Douglas moved to provide territorial governments for the upper portion of the Louisiana Purchase, an area north of 36°30' (comprising present-day North and South Dakota, Kansas, Nebraska, and parts of Colorado, Wyoming, and Montana).
 - 1. One possible motive for this move was to promote a transcontinental railroad out of Chicago.
 - 2. There are other theories about Douglas's motivation that we will not cover in detail.
 - B. Douglas proposed to repeal the Missouri Compromise to gain southern support for his proposal. This would potentially open the territory to the expansion of slavery.
 - C. Douglas saw his move as relatively noncontroversial.
 - 1. He claimed that the Compromise of 1850 had superseded the Missouri Compromise (notwithstanding that they applied to two different territories altogether).
 - 2. He did not believe, as a practical matter, that slavery could survive in the new territories, although he could not say that publicly.
 - 3. He believed that the principle of popular sovereignty was paramount in any case.
 - D. Controversy quickly surrounded the Kansas-Nebraska Act and fueled sectional tensions.
 - E. The Act brought Lincoln back into politics, to campaign in 1854 for candidates pledged for its repeal.

- III. The Kansas-Nebraska Act, allowing for popular sovereignty, was signed into law by President Franklin Pierce and would be the source of continuing controversy.
- A. It stimulated a rush by pro-slavery and antislavery forces to settle Kansas, because it didn't make clear when the slavery question would be decided.
 - 1. The New England Immigrant Aid Society funded anti-slavery settlers.
 - 2. This prompted slaveowners in Missouri to rush into Kansas with their slaves.
 - B. Early pro-slavery settlers took advantage of their position.
 - 1. There was a territorial law prohibiting an anti-slavery position.
 - 2. There was gerrymandering of voting districts.
 - 3. There was a proposed constitutional amendment to allow for slavery.
 - C. Kansas quickly became a symbol.
 - D. The Lecompton constitution controversy caused problems for both Douglas and Lincoln.
 - 1. The convention that wrote the constitution was legal but unrepresentative by the time it reported out.
 - 2. It proposed a constitution that would make Kansas a slave state.
 - 3. James Buchanan endorsed the constitution and made it a test of Democratic Party loyalty.
 - 4. Douglas broke with Buchanan over the issue, calling the Lecompton constitution a "mockery" of popular sovereignty.
 - 5. His opposition to Lecompton made Douglas attractive to some Republicans as a "fusion" candidate.
 - 6. This in turn posed a political threat to Lincoln.
 - E. During 1855–57, the issue of slavery smoldered in the territories.
 - 1. Lincoln began to speak out against slavery itself, while supporting the existing fugitive slave laws.
 - 2. He had to navigate between two extreme positions.
 - 3. In doing so, he worked out a theory of U.S. history, the Constitution, and slavery that would sustain him in the future.

Essential Reading:

David Potter, *The Impending Crisis, 1848–1861*, chapters 7, 12.

David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln*, chapter 7.

Supplementary Reading:

Kenneth M. Stampp, *America in 1857*, chapters 6, 10.

Elbert B. Smith, *The Presidency of James Buchanan*, chapter 5.

Questions to Consider:

- 1. Did Douglas's political objectives require the repeal of the Missouri Compromise? If so, could he have justified this course of action more effectively?
- 2. Could the ambiguity about whether the Lecompton constitution represented popular sovereignty have been avoided? If so, how?

Lecture Six

The Peoria Speech, 1854

Scope: During the fall of 1854, while the major political parties were in flux, Lincoln campaigned for candidates opposed to the Kansas-Nebraska Act. His major speech was delivered in substantially identical form in Springfield and Peoria. In this speech, Lincoln explained how he found the Kansas-Nebraska Act to be a historical aberration and a dangerous departure. We will examine the speech and the effects of the midterm elections of 1854.

Outline

- I. The passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act brought Lincoln back into politics.
 - A. It destabilized the two major parties of the time, namely the Democrats and the Whigs.
 - 1. Both northern and southern Democrats were committed to popular sovereignty, but differed on the timing of when this would be applied to deciding the status of the territory.
 - 2. The Whig Party died as a result of this Act. Southern Whigs joined Southern Democrats and the emerging Know-Nothing Party, while Northern Whigs went largely with anti-Nebraska forces.
 - B. Lincoln campaigned for Illinois Whig candidates opposed to the Act.
 - C. His most complete statement of principles came in the fall of 1854, in a speech given in Springfield and then again in Peoria.
- II. The Peoria speech (which is over forty printed pages long) contains the key ideas of Lincoln's political philosophy regarding slavery. In it, he makes a distinction between the existence of the institution of slavery and its extension into the territories.
 - A. Lincoln refutes the arguments supporting popular sovereignty.
 - 1. He denies that the Founding Fathers supported slavery, citing Thomas Jefferson and the prohibition on slavery in the Northwest Territories.
 - 2. He denies the applicability of "the sacred right of self-government" to the case at hand.
 - 3. He uses the technique of *reductio ad absurdum* to show how popular sovereignty will not work in this case.
 - B. Lincoln argues that the question of extending popular sovereignty is a national concern, not just one that concerns the South or the people who actually go into the territory to live.
 - 1. In asserting this, he goes out of his way not to attack the South.
 - 2. He outlines the constitutional right to slavery.
 - 3. He admits that he has no answer to the problem of the existing institution.
 - C. Lincoln states his basic moral position.
 - 1. He explains why he hates slavery.
 - 2. He accuses Douglas of moral indifference, a charge he will embellish in years to come.
 - 3. He proves that the Negro is a man.
 - 4. Yet he stops short of calling for abolition, citing the constraint of public opinion on what he can propose rhetorically.
 - D. Lincoln suggests that the arguments justifying popular sovereignty would also justify reopening the slave trade.
 - 1. He argues that if a person could take his slaves into Nebraska, then that person could just as well import slaves into Nebraska, which would actually be cheaper.
 - 2. This is another example of a *reductio ad absurdum* argument.
 - 3. He attacks Douglas as being inconsistent and maybe even duplicitous on this issue.
 - E. Lincoln argues that the repeal of the Missouri Compromise (which Douglas himself supported, but is now trying to repeal) is unfair to the North.
 - F. Lincoln introduces the idea that popular sovereignty is not neutral, but that, in fact, Douglas secretly desires the spread of slavery.

G. Finally, he turns aside the charge that he (Lincoln) is secretly an abolitionist.

III. The Peoria speech reflects Lincoln's pragmatic political calculation.

- A. He is not concerned with who his allies happen to be (e.g., abolitionists).
- B. He appeals to the middle ground and points out the dangerous extremes.
- C. He appeals to the memory of Webster and Clay and places himself with them; he even invokes the Founding Fathers.
- D. His advocacy caused him to be considered for a seat in the Senate after the 1854 midterm elections.

Essential Reading (one of the following):

Roy P. Basler, *Abraham Lincoln: His Speeches and Writings*, pp. 283–325.

Lincoln: Speeches and Writings, vol. 1, pp. 307–348.

Supplementary Reading:

Harry V. Jaffa, *Crisis of the House Divided*, chapters 12–13.

Questions to Consider:

1. Did Lincoln effectively find a middle ground between slavery and abolition?
2. How strong is Lincoln's refutation of Douglas's arguments for the Kansas-Nebraska Act?

Lecture Seven

Lincoln's Rhetoric and Politics, 1854–1857

Scope: In this lecture, we will examine the evolution of Lincoln's thought during the period between the Kansas-Nebraska Act and the *Dred Scott* decision. We will find Lincoln building on the logic of the Peoria speech. The *Dred Scott* decision, however, seemingly threatened the political positions of both Lincoln and Douglas.

Outline

- I. Lincoln had been considered for senator in 1855, based on his campaigning performance in the off-year elections of 1854.
 - A. He had been nominated by anti-Nebraska Whigs.
 - B. Delegates pledged to Lyman Trumbull, an anti-Nebraska Democrat, would not yield to Lincoln.
 - C. Fearing the election of James Shields, Douglas's candidate and a pro-Nebraska Democrat, Lincoln instructed his supporters to back Trumbull.
 - D. This incident would furnish the grounds for Douglas's later claim that Lincoln and Trumbull had a plot to capture both senate seats and convert both parties to abolition.
- II. Lincoln's views evolved in letters and speeches during 1855 and 1856, while he was out of active politics and practicing law.
 - A. In 1855, he wrote Judge George Robertson of Lexington, Kentucky, to thank him for the gift of a book and a copy of his (Robertson's) speeches.
 1. He stated that the country had lost a commitment to equality of men.
 2. He despaired for the eventual "peaceful" extinction of slavery.
 3. He used the "half slave and half free" phrase, but admitted that he did not have a solution.
 - B. In August 1855, he wrote to his friend Joshua Speed (who was a slaveholder).
 1. He explained that he did not oppose the master's property right to his slave.
 2. He stated that he did not oppose the Fugitive Slave Law.
 3. He confined his opposition to the extension of slavery.
 4. He despaired of a fair election in Kansas.
 5. He acknowledged the ambiguity of his political position since the Whig Party was in collapse.
 6. He concludes with the idea that we are worse off than at the time of the American Revolution.
 - C. He spoke in favor of John C. Fremont during the 1856 election campaign.
 1. In May 1856, he became a Republican and delivered the "lost speech" at the state convention. This speech is called "lost" because no one apparently transcribed it.
 2. He spoke in Kalamazoo in August, objecting to the label "abolitionist." This speech contains the ideas of the national question of the territories; the difference between free (northern) laborers and fettered (southern) slaves; and the "right to rise," that is, to improve one's lot in life. The speech ended with a denial that the Republican Party was sectional and abolitionist.
 3. He gave a speech in the late summer of 1856, again denying that the Republicans were a sectional (northern) party.
 4. He pointed out the real issue: extension of slavery into the territories.
- III. In 1857, the Supreme Court handed down the *Dred Scott* decision.
 - A. Dred Scott was a slave who had traveled with his Missouri owner.
 1. In 1833, he had been taken for over two years to Fort Armstrong, Illinois, a free state.
 2. In 1838, he was taken to Fort Snelling in Wisconsin territory, free by the terms of the Missouri Compromise.
 - B. In 1846, Dred Scott sued for his freedom. His case worked its way through the courts up to the United States Supreme Court, where it was decided in 1857.
 - C. The Supreme Court decision had three principal parts.

1. Blacks were not U.S. citizens, so Dred Scott had no standing to sue.
 2. Dred Scott did not become free by virtue of living in Illinois, because the principle of “interstate comity” made him subject to Missouri law when he returned.
 3. He did not become free by virtue of living in Wisconsin territory, because the Missouri Compromise restriction was unconstitutional (based on the Fifth Amendment). This meant that Congress had no power to restrict the expansion of slavery.
- D. The *Dred Scott* decision was controversial.
1. It was the first case since *Marbury v. Madison* to invalidate federal law.
 2. It was a split decision.
 3. There was disagreement about whether all aspects of the decision were binding.
 4. It was one of the first cases to rely on the intent of the framers.
 5. It would create rhetorical problems for both Douglas and Lincoln.

Essential Reading (one of the following):

Roy P. Basler, *Abraham Lincoln: His Speeches and Writings*, pp. 330–336, 339–346, 347–352.

Lincoln: Speeches and Writings, vol. 1, pp. 359–363, 370–374, 376–382.

Supplementary Reading:

Kenneth M. Stampp, *America in 1857*, chapter 4.

Don E. Fehrenbacher, *The Dred Scott Case*, chapter 14.

David Potter, *The Impending Crisis*, chapter 11.

Allan Nevins, *The Emergence of Lincoln*, chapter 4.

Questions to Consider:

1. Should Lincoln have tried less hard to blunt the charge that he was an abolitionist?
2. Could either Lincoln or Douglas more effectively have repaired his rhetorical position in the aftermath of the *Dred Scott* decision?

Lecture Eight

The Springfield Speech, 1857

Scope: By holding that Congress had no power to prohibit slavery in the territories, the *Dred Scott* decision seemingly undercut the Republican platform. But it also seemed to invalidate the Democratic Party's devotion to popular sovereignty, according to which the people who went to a territory would decide whether it would be slave or free. Both Douglas and Lincoln found it necessary to restate and defend their political principles in the wake of the *Dred Scott* decision. This lecture will explore the speeches in which they did so.

Outline

- I. The *Dred Scott* decision threatened to undercut the platforms of both parties.
 - A. Republicans believed that Congress could and should prevent the spread of slavery in the territories.
 1. They called for overturning the decision by political means.
 2. They denied the final authority of the Supreme Court.
 3. They dismissed much of the decision as *dicta*.
 4. They alleged a conspiracy to nationalize slavery.
 - B. Democrats like Douglas believed that, subject to the will of the people, territorial legislatures could prevent the introduction of slavery. However, there was another possibility.
 1. Territorial governments were creations of Congress.
 2. Thus, under *Scott*, these governments could be seen as having no power to prevent slavery.
 - C. Douglas, speaking on June 12 in Springfield, Illinois, tried to reconcile popular sovereignty with the *Dred Scott* decision.
 1. He supported the "sanctity" of Supreme Court decisions, but held that they do not invalidate popular sovereignty.
 2. He distinguished territorial legislatures from Congress.
 3. He suggested that, as a practical matter, territories could exclude slavery by refusing to pass "friendly local legislation."
- II. Lincoln's Springfield speech of June 26, 1857, reveals his strategic moves in response to the *Dred Scott* decision and prefigured arguments that he would use in the future Lincoln-Douglas debates.
 - A. He denied the Supreme Court's claims about the intent of the Founders with respect to equality for blacks.
 1. Using the rhetorical device of "disassociation," he attenuated the meaning of "equality" and focused on economic rights.
 2. He disclaimed any desire to achieve "perfect equality" (a code word for racial intermarriage).
 - B. He regarded the attainment of equality as an ultimate goal, not an immediate need.
 1. This enables him to take a middle position between slaveholding and emancipation.
 2. The Founders' standard of "all men are created equal" is one to strive to achieve, to approximate ever more closely, even if not attained in practice.
 3. He stated that Douglas's view of the Declaration of Independence compares equality between Great Britain and the colonists.
 - C. He defended against the charge that he and his party were extremists.
 1. He doesn't believe that this decision can set a precedent.
 2. He agrees only with the first part (*viz.*, Scott's lack of standing to sue).
 3. He denies that he resists the decision.
 4. He uses the *tu quoque* ("you're another") technique to remind his audience of Douglas's opposition to the Supreme Court's *National Bank* decision years earlier.
 - D. He attacked Douglas as an extremist who was planning to make slavery national.
 1. His (Douglas's) willingness to annul the territorial charter of Utah proves that he is hypocritical about popular sovereignty.
 2. He is dulling public opinion to the moral dimension of the issue.

3. The extension of slavery into the territories will doom colonization, which seems (to Lincoln) to be the only practical solution to the problem.
- E. This speech foreshadowed the appeals Lincoln would use during the following year in his senate campaign.

Essential Reading (one of the following):

Roy P. Basler, *Abraham Lincoln: His Speeches and Writings*, pp. 352–366.

Lincoln: Speeches and Writings, vol. 1, pp. 390–403.

Supplementary Reading:

David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln*, pp. 196–206.

Robert W. Johannsen, *Stephen A. Douglas*, chapter 22.

Questions to Consider:

1. Did Lincoln succeed in his attempt to clarify the meaning of “equality” in the Declaration of Independence and to give it a long time frame?
2. Did the Springfield speech establish Douglas as an extremist who changed the understanding of the slavery question that had prevailed until 1854?

Lecture Nine

The “House Divided” Speech, 1858

Scope: In 1858, the Illinois State Republican convention took the unusual step of nominating Lincoln to fill the senate seat currently occupied by Stephen A. Douglas. Lincoln accepted the nomination with a speech known by its key phrase, “a house divided against itself cannot stand.” Although often understood today as a forecast of civil war, the speech was intended to convey a quite different message—that Republicans should not succumb to the temptation of supporting Douglas, who had broken with Buchanan over Lecompton, because he was actually encouraging a plan to make slavery legal all over the nation.

Outline

- I. The “House Divided” speech (June 1858) came about under unusual circumstances.
 - A. It was not customary for state conventions to nominate a candidate.
 - 1. Senators were elected by state legislators, so the first campaign was for the legislature.
 - 2. Lincoln had been asked to speak originally because he was expected to be entertaining.
 - B. Lincoln’s nomination was intended to avert Republican defections to Douglas after his break with Buchanan over the Lecompton constitution.
- II. The thesis of the speech is often misunderstood.
 - A. Lincoln does not forecast civil war; he denies that the Union will be dissolved.
 - B. He draws the inference from his understanding of the situation that the Union will (of necessity) become either all slave or all free.
 - 1. “All slave” means making slavery lawful everywhere.
 - 2. “All free” does not mean abolition, but refers to a “public mind” that is confident of the ultimate extinction of slavery.
 - 3. Here we see Lincoln finding a middle ground between slavery and abolition.
 - C. He suggests by rhetorical question that the country is moving in the direction of national slavery.
- III. The middle (and longest) section of the speech suggests the means by which national slavery will be achieved, and he implies that there is a conspiracy, headed by Douglas, to achieve it.
 - A. Lincoln develops the metaphor of a machine and its “chief bosses.”
 - 1. The machinery consists of the Kansas-Nebraska Act and the *Dred Scott* decision.
 - 2. Lincoln interprets anomalous past events as parts of the plan, and points out Douglas’s role in them.
 - B. He suggests that the difference between Douglas and Buchanan over Lecompton is trivial.
 - 1. Douglas opposed Lecompton because he felt it didn’t represent the will of the people.
 - 2. Lincoln takes Douglas’s words out of context here to make his point.
 - C. He argues that the *Dred Scott* decision undercuts any genuine popular sovereignty position, so Douglas’s motives are suspect.
 - D. He posits that Douglas is part of a plot to prepare the country for a “second *Dred Scott* decision.”
 - 1. This imagined decision would deny *states* the power to outlaw slavery.
 - 2. Douglas’s role is to dull public opinion so that people will be indifferent about the matter.
 - 3. Lincoln makes his point indirectly and uses the analogy of a frame house assembled by four workers: Stephen (Douglas), Franklin (Pierce), Roger (Taney—Chief Justice who wrote the *Dred Scott* decision), and James (Buchanan).
 - 4. The Supreme Court will step into the breach created by public indifference to issue “*Dred Scott II*.”
 - 5. Lincoln develops this charge by taking Douglas’s words out of context.
 - 6. There is little evidence to support these charges but Lincoln renders them plausible.
 - E. Lincoln suggests that the logic of popular sovereignty would justify reopening the African slave trade.

- IV. The concluding section is an attempt to prevent Republicans from supporting Douglas. Such support would dash Lincoln's political hopes.
- A. On the surface, Lincoln is deferential to Douglas and does not question his motives.
 - B. Douglas does not favor the Republican positions and hence would be a dangerous ally.
 - C. Republicans can win if they are patient and entrust their leadership to true friends.
- V. The "House Divided" speech proved significant in the course of the campaign.
- A. Lincoln gave it against the advice of most of his aides.
 - B. He appears to have been very pleased with it.
 - C. It became an albatross during the campaign.
 - 1. Douglas did not believe that the country must be all slave or all free.
 - 2. But he pointed out that Lincoln did and, hence, that Lincoln must be a secret abolitionist.
 - 3. To support abolition was politically suicidal in Illinois in 1858.
 - D. Lincoln spent much of the ensuing senatorial campaign trying to backpedal from the implications of the "House Divided" speech.
 - E. The speech "mainstreamed" the argument that there was a slave power conspiracy.
 - F. The speech has been remembered, misleadingly, mostly for its seeming prophecy of the coming of the Civil War.

Essential Reading (one of the following):

Roy P. Basler, *Abraham Lincoln: His Speeches and Writings*, pp. 372–381.

Lincoln: Speeches and Writings, vol. 1, pp. 426–434.

Paul M. Angle, *The Complete Lincoln-Douglas Debates*, pp. 1–9.

Supplementary Reading:

Don E. Fehrenbacher, *Prelude to Greatness*, chapter 4.

Eric Foner, *Politics and Ideology in the Age of the Civil War*, chapter 2.

Elbert B. Smith, *The Presidency of James Buchanan*, chapter 6.

David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln*, pp. 206–209.

Questions to Consider:

1. How was Lincoln able to make the concept of a "slave power conspiracy" plausible?
2. Was Lincoln believable when he argued that Douglas was part of the plot?

Lecture Ten

The Chicago Speech, July 1858

Scope: When Congress adjourned, Douglas returned to Illinois to begin his campaign. He delivered a blistering attack on the “house divided” doctrine. Lincoln answered Douglas the next night. He claimed that his speech had been misconstrued but he delivered a ringing statement seeming to support racial equality. This statement would create problems for Lincoln among more moderate voters and he would retreat from it later in the campaign.

Outline

- I. Lincoln’s Chicago speech on 10 July 1858 should be understood as a direct reply to Douglas.
 - A. Douglas directly attacked the “house divided” doctrine.
 - 1. He claimed that it called for national uniformity.
 - 2. He charged that it therefore must be supporting abolition.
 - B. Douglas made attacking Lincoln rather than defending his own senate record the strategy for his campaign.
- II. Lincoln tries to place Douglas in a weak rhetorical position.
 - A. He maintains that the *Dred Scott* decision undermines popular sovereignty, one of Douglas’s key doctrines. Thus, Lincoln points out an inconsistency in Douglas’s position.
 - B. He belittles Douglas’s insistence on the sanctity of the decision.
 - C. He minimizes the significance of Douglas’s break with Buchanan over Lecompton and chides him for taking credit for his opposition to Lecompton.
 - D. He ridicules, but does not deny, Douglas’s accusation that Republicans and Buchanan supporters are in league against him.
 - E. He tries to alienate Douglas from the immigrant vote.
- III. Lincoln seeks to clarify his own views on the “house divided” doctrine.
 - A. He refined his views on popular sovereignty.
 - B. He denies Douglas’s charge that he is an abolitionist.
 - 1. Lincoln says that he (Lincoln) is not in favor of either legal uniformity among all the states or sectional war over the issue of slavery.
 - 2. Lincoln makes a distinction between favoring “extinction” of slavery and actually predicting its ultimate demise.
 - 3. Lincoln again appeals to the Founding Fathers’ view on the issue.
- IV. Lincoln balances appeals to moderate and more radical factions within his party.
 - A. He appeals to old-line Whigs by identifying himself with Henry Clay.
 - B. He appeals to radicals by making clear his views on slavery.
 - 1. He identifies emotionally with the abolitionists.
 - 2. He refutes Douglas’s contention that the Negro was not considered a man for purposes of the Declaration of Independence.
 - 3. His peroration is a ringing defense of the principle of human equality.
 - C. He appeals to Republicans not to follow the siren song of endorsing Douglas.

Essential Reading (one of the following):

Roy P. Basler, *Abraham Lincoln: His Speeches and Writings*, pp. 385–405.

Lincoln: Speeches and Writings, vol. 1, pp. 439–458.

Paul M. Angle, *The Complete Lincoln-Douglas Debates*, pp. 26–42.

Supplementary Reading:

David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln*, pp. 209–215.

Allan Nevins, *The Emergence of Lincoln*, pp. 363–373.

Robert W. Johannsen, *Stephen A. Douglas*, pp. 641–644.

Questions to Consider:

1. Was Lincoln able to defend himself regarding the “house divided” doctrine and place the burden of proof back on Douglas?
2. On balance, did Lincoln’s conclusion do him more good than harm?

Lecture Eleven

The Springfield Speech, July 1858

Scope: From Chicago, Lincoln and Douglas both traveled to Springfield. Lincoln was in the audience while Douglas spoke, then rose and offered to speak later to explain his views. Again Lincoln denied the seemingly radical nature of the “house divided” position, and he pointed out that Douglas had not answered his allegation that the incumbent was part of a plot to spread slavery all over the nation.

Outline

- I. Lincoln attacks Douglas’s view of popular sovereignty in sometimes excessive language.
 - A. He reduces popular sovereignty as applying to the single issue of slavery and then claims that *Dred Scott* invalidates it in the territories.
 - B. He denies that anyone opposes popular sovereignty for states.
 - C. He minimizes the significance of Douglas’s break with Buchanan over Lecompton.
- II. Lincoln defends the position he had articulated in the “house divided” speech.
 - A. He notes that Douglas, having read the speech, found no errors of fact or inference in the arguments.
 - B. He again denies that he intends to promote or to encourage sectional warfare.
 - C. He defends the historical validity of his position.
 1. He identifies it with the Founding Fathers.
 2. He claims that it was commonly accepted until 1854.
 3. He regards the Kansas-Nebraska Act as the first step in a conspiracy.
 4. He notes that Douglas has not refuted the “frame house” conspiracy charge and then throws down the gantlet again, charging him with being part of the conspiracy.
 5. He uses the history of the Missouri Compromise era to deny Douglas’s claim that he favors uniformity among the states.
 - D. He ridicules the attempt by Douglas to claim Clay’s mantle since Clay opposed repeal of the Missouri Compromise.
- III. Lincoln clarifies his opposition to the *Dred Scott* case.
 - A. The basis of his opposition is different from what Douglas asserts. He (Lincoln) does not resist the decision, but objects to it as establishing a political principle.
 - B. He turns the tables on Douglas’s theory.
 1. Douglas had argued for sanctity of court decisions.
 2. Lincoln notes that this defense is inconsistent with Jackson’s behavior (and that of his supporters, including Douglas) in the National Bank case years earlier.
 3. Lincoln concludes that Douglas favors Supreme Court decisions when he likes them.
 4. Douglas likes *Dred Scott* because it will lead to national slavery.
- IV. Lincoln stakes out his views on racial equality.
 - A. He ridicules Douglas’s attempt to claim Clay’s mantle.
 - B. He challenges Douglas to commit to support the Declaration of Independence.
 - C. He dissociates the concept of “equality” (just as he did in the 1857 Springfield—or *Dred Scott*—speech covered in Lecture Eight).
 - D. He denies Douglas’s claim that the Founding Fathers *brought* slavery to the territory.
 - E. He states his own position favoring geographic separation of the races.

Essential Reading (one of the following):

Roy P. Basler, *Abraham Lincoln: His Speeches and Writings*, pp. 405–424.
Lincoln: Speeches and Writings, vol. 1, pp. 460–479.

Paul M. Angle, *The Complete Lincoln-Douglas Debates*, pp. 66–82.

Supplementary Reading:

Robert W. Johannsen, *Stephen A. Douglas*, pp. 655–662.

Don E. Fehrenbacher, *The Dred Scott Case*, chapter 19.

Questions to Consider:

1. How convincing was Lincoln's theory of the course of slavery throughout American history?
2. How strong was Lincoln's proof that Douglas was part of a conspiracy to nationalize slavery?

Lecture Twelve

The Debate About the Debates

Scope: Having trouble attracting his own crowds, Lincoln followed Douglas as a kind of “truth squad.” When the partisan press began to ridicule him for doing so, Lincoln resolved on a different strategy. After Douglas’s schedule of campaign appearances had been published, Lincoln challenged him to a series of approximately fifty debates. There followed intense negotiations between the principals on the details of the debates. This lecture will review the “debate about the debates” and suggest that it has a contemporary character.

Outline

- I.** Lincoln and Douglas negotiated a plan for seven debates during the 1858 senatorial campaign.
 - A.** Lincoln had been following Douglas and speaking at the same locations.
 - B.** Waiting until Douglas’s schedule was published, Lincoln then challenged him to about fifty debates.
 - C.** Douglas was in a quandary.
 1. He had no reason to accept Lincoln’s challenge.
 2. But to deny it would suggest that he had something to hide or was not up to the job.
 3. Douglas counterproposed a series of seven debates. This would be sufficient to cover all nine congressional districts (two of which were covered by the Chicago and Springfield speeches).
 - D.** After complaining that Douglas was not really responding positively, Lincoln accepted the terms.
 1. The debates would be held in Ottawa, Freeport, Jonesboro, Charleston, Galesburg, Quincy, and Alton.
 2. Lincoln agreed not to show up at any more Douglas rallies.
- II.** The format of the debates was simple.
 - A.** Each debate was three hours long. There was a moderator, a time-keeper, and journalists to transcribe the speeches.
 - B.** There was a sixty-minute opening speech, a ninety-minute response, and a thirty-minute rejoinder.
 - C.** The candidates alternated who spoke first.
- III.** The debates reflected the political geography of Illinois.
 - A.** The southern part of the state (roughly from Springfield to Cairo) was heavily Democratic and loyal to Douglas rather than to Buchanan. This part of the state had been settled first, mostly from the south and was therefore pro-southern in sentiment.
 - B.** The northern part (including Chicago and the area north of modern Interstate 80) was solidly Republican, even perhaps leaning toward abolitionism.
 - C.** The swing votes would be found in the center of the state, between Ottawa in the north and Springfield in the south.
 1. This region was populated by old-line Whigs, who had split their loyalty after that party dissolved.
 2. As a group, they were both antislavery and anti-abolition, in line with the Whiggish notion that slavery would eventually disappear in good time.
 3. Five of the seven debates were held in this central area.
 4. Debate strategy was based on the necessity to appeal to this crucial bloc of voters: Lincoln wanted to show that Douglas sought to nationalize slavery and Douglas wanted to show that Lincoln was an abolitionist.
- IV.** The debates were significant communal events.
 - A.** They attracted audiences ranging from 2,000 (Jonesboro) to 20,000 (Galesburg). People would start to gather in mid-morning for the afternoon debates, hold picnics, play games, etc.
 - B.** They were stenographically recorded, telegraphically transmitted, and reprinted in newspapers in the east as well as in Illinois.
 1. This was a first in American political history.

2. Partisan papers often doctored the telegraphic transcript to make their candidate appear in a more favorable light. This has led to two approaches to the collected speeches, one taking the favorable speeches and the other taking the unfavorable speeches (see Bibliography for information on these collections).
- C. The debates dominated the Illinois political landscape from late August to mid-October.
- V. The content of the debates may seem surprising.
- A. Little attention (perhaps no more than thirty minutes total) was given to the central question of whether it was right to permit slavery to spread to the territories.
 1. This was due in part to the need to appeal to the swing voters.
 2. It was also due in part to the realization that such an approach would quickly stalemate the debate.
 3. The procedural claim to morality (Douglas) and the substantive claim to morality (Lincoln) would thus have to clash indirectly.
 - B. Instead, the debates were consumed with various “conspiracy” arguments, legal arguments, and historical arguments.
 - C. Douglas’s position remained constant across the series of debates, whereas Lincoln’s evolved between the beginning and the end.

Essential Reading:

Paul M. Angle, *The Complete Lincoln-Douglas Debates*, pp. 83–88.

Supplementary Reading:

Don E. Fehrenbacher, *Prelude to Greatness*, chapter 5.

David Potter, *The Impending Crisis*, chapter 13.

Damon Wells, *Stephen Douglas: The Last Years*, chapter 4.

Robert W. Johannsen, *Stephen A. Douglas*, pp. 662–676.

David Zarefsky, *Lincoln, Douglas, and Slavery*, pp. 50–54.

Questions to Consider:

1. How *should* Douglas have responded to Lincoln’s challenge for fifty or more debates?
2. How will the attitudes of the swing voters in central Illinois constrain the arguments that Lincoln and Douglas can make?

Timeline

| | |
|------------|---|
| 1809 | Born near Hodgenville, Kentucky (February 12) |
| 1816 | Moves to Indiana |
| 1830 | Moves to Illinois |
| 1831 | Leaves his father's house; settles in New Salem |
| 1834 | Elected to Illinois State Legislature for the first of four terms |
| 1837 | Moves to Springfield |
| 1838 | Delivers first major address, the Lyceum Speech |
| 1842 | Marries Mary Todd of Lexington, Kentucky |
| 1846 | Elected to U.S. Congress for session beginning December 1847 |
| 1849 | Returns to Illinois and the practice of law; returns to politics to campaign for candidates opposed to the Kansas-Nebraska Act; becomes a candidate for the U.S. Senate |
| 1856 | Formally becomes a Republican |
| 1857 | Opposes <i>Dred Scott</i> decision |
| 1858 | Nominated for U.S. Senate (June 16); Lincoln-Douglas debates (August 21–October 15) |
| 1859 | Ohio speaking tour |
| 1860 | Cooper Union address (February 27); receives Republican nomination for President; elected President of the United States |
| 1861 | First Inaugural Address; outbreak of the Civil War; calls for enlistment of volunteers |
| 1862 | Prepares Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation; Annual Message supports colonization |
| 1863 | Emancipation Proclamation; Battles of Gettysburg and Vicksburg; Gettysburg Address |
| 1864 | Reelection of Lincoln |
| 1865 | Second Inaugural Address; surrender of Robert E. Lee; assassination (April 14) |

Glossary

Chiasmus: A rhetorical structure in which the climax comes in the middle, with equal emphasis to building up to the climax and moving from the climax.

Colonization: A policy of freeing the slaves and removing them beyond the United States, usually to Africa. Henry Clay was associated with this policy. Lincoln also supported it as late as 1862.

Compromise of 1850: A multiple-part compromise developed originally by Henry Clay and pushed to completion by Stephen A. Douglas. Its principal provisions were: (1) California would enter the Union as a free state, upsetting the balance between free and slave states. (2) In states to be formed from Utah and New Mexico territories (present-day Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada, Utah, and part of Colorado), the decision about slavery would be made by those who lived there. (3) The western boundary of Texas was moved east; in return, the federal government assumed the debt of the Republic of Texas. (4) A strict fugitive slave law was passed. (5) The slave trade, but not slavery itself, was eliminated in the District of Columbia.

Dissociation: A rhetorical device to divide a seemingly unitary concept into two parts, one of which will be rejected and the other preferred. The effect of dissociation is to redefine the previously unitary term.

Dred Scott decision: An 1857 decision of the Supreme Court that had three principal parts: (1) Blacks were not U.S. citizens, so Dred Scott had no standing to sue. (2) Dred Scott's residence in Illinois did not make him free because he subsequently returned to Missouri and hence was bound by the laws of that state. (3) Dred Scott's residence in Minnesota territory did not make him free because Congress had no power to prevent the slaveowner from taking his property there; hence, the Missouri Compromise was unconstitutional.

"Dred Scott II": A hypothetical future Supreme Court decision that Lincoln and others believed would hold that no state had the power to outlaw slavery.

Friendly local legislation: Territorial legislation to protect the property rights of a slaveowner once he brought slaves into the territory. Douglas claimed that territories could exclude slavery, despite the *Dred Scott* decision, by refusing to pass such legislation. Lincoln held that anyone who supported the *Dred Scott* decision would be obliged to support such legislation in order to be consistent with his oath to support the Constitution.

Interrogatories: Questions that Lincoln and Douglas propounded to each other during the course of their debates.

Kansas-Nebraska Act: Created territorial governments for the northern part of the Louisiana Purchase (present-day Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota, North Dakota, and parts of Colorado, Wyoming, and Montana). The Act stated that all decisions about slavery were to be made by the settlers of the territories through their appropriate representatives. This act explicitly repealed the Missouri Compromise.

Know-Nothing: A political party formed in 1854 based on opposition to immigration. Formally called the American Party, it received the nickname of "Know-Nothing" because, when asked about its activities, members replied, "I know nothing."

Lecompton constitution: A proposed state constitution under which Kansas would have entered the Union as a slave state. It included a limited referendum specifically on the slavery clause, but "the constitution without slavery" would have maintained the status of slaves already in the territory. Free-state supporters boycotted this referendum, which carried by about 8 to 1. Meanwhile, the newly elected territorial legislature called for a referendum on the entire document. This vote was boycotted by the slave-state forces and was defeated by about 10 to 1. Congress determined an expedient for obtaining an additional vote, at which the Lecompton constitution was decisively defeated.

Missouri Compromise: Provided that Missouri would enter the Union in 1820 as a slave state and Maine as a free state. In addition, slavery would be prohibited from all territory in the Louisiana Purchase north of latitude 36°30' (the southern boundary of Missouri). South of that line, slavery was permitted but not guaranteed.

Popular sovereignty: The principle that local communities are empowered to regulate their own domestic institutions. Stephen A. Douglas championed this principle as the way to decide the question of slavery in the territories. Lincoln insisted that popular sovereignty had no just application to that issue.

Rhetoric: The study of the available means of persuasion in a given case. Possibilities for persuasion depend on the constraints imposed by the audience and the situation and the opportunities the speaker can find for navigating these constraints.

Spot resolutions: Resolutions introduced by Lincoln during his term in the House of Representatives, calling on President Polk to identify the “spot” of American soil on which he thought American blood had been shed. Polk had used the claim, “American blood has been shed on American soil,” as a justification for the Mexican War.

Squatter sovereignty: Lincoln’s term of ridicule for the principle of popular sovereignty.

Toombs bill: A bill proposed in Congress, but never passed, that would have established procedures by which Kansas would develop a constitution and seek admission as a state. The Toombs bill would have been an alternative to the procedure of the Lecompton constitution.

Wilmot Proviso: A provision stipulating that slavery would be prohibited in any territory acquired as a result of the Mexican War. This provision was repeatedly attached to legislation in the House of Representatives and repeatedly rejected by the Senate. The controversy was resolved with the Compromise of 1850.

Biographical Notes

Benton, Thomas Hart. (1782–1858) Missouri politician and former U.S. Senator who favored St. Louis as the eastern terminus for the proposed transcontinental railroad.

Breckinridge, John C. (1821–1875). Vice President of the United States under James Buchanan; Presidential nominee of the southern Democrats in 1860.

Brooks, Preston S. (1819–1857) South Carolina Congressman who attacked Senator Charles Sumner with a cane in response to Sumner's speech, "The Crime Against Kansas." Lincoln quoted Brooks to emphasize that even extreme southerners thought that the Founding Fathers believed that slavery was in the course of ultimate extinction.

Buchanan, James (1791–1868). Fifteenth President of the United States, 1857–1861. A Democrat from Pennsylvania, he had been nominated in 1856 when Stephen A. Douglas released his delegates. In office, Buchanan supported the Lecompton constitution and made it a test of party loyalty, leading Douglas to break with him.

Clay, Henry (1777–1852). A prominent member of the Senate and three-time unsuccessful nominee of the Whig Party for president. Clay is associated prominently with the Missouri Compromise; the Compromise of 1833, which ended the nullification crisis; and the Compromise of 1850, which averted a threat of disunion over the slavery controversy.

Crittenden, John J. (1787–1863). U.S. Senator from Kentucky who was widely regarded as the ideological heir of Henry Clay. A letter from Crittenden endorsing Stephen A. Douglas was released in the closing days of the 1858 campaign.

Douglas, Stephen A. (1813–1861). Lincoln's archrival in Illinois politics, his opponent in the 1858 senate race, and his principal opponent in the north in the 1860 presidential election. Douglas served briefly in the Illinois State legislature and on the Illinois Supreme Court. He was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1843 and served two terms. He served in the U.S. Senate from 1847 until his death. The Chair of the Committee on Territories, he authored the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854. He championed the principle of popular sovereignty even in the aftermath of the *Dred Scott* decision.

Everett, Edward (1794–1865). A recognized clergyman, orator, and statesman. The former president of Harvard University, he was the principal speaker at the dedication of the cemetery at Gettysburg on November 19, 1863.

Fremont, John C. (1813–1890). Western explorer and Republican presidential candidate in 1856. Father-in law of Thomas Hart Benton.

Lincoln, Abraham (1809–1865). Sixteenth President of the United States, 1861–1865. For biographical details, see the timeline.

Lovejoy, Elijah (1802 –1837). Presbyterian minister and abolitionist newspaper editor in Alton, Illinois, who was attacked and murdered by a mob.

Matheny, James H. (1818–1890). A political associate of Lincoln's in the Illinois Whig Party. In the Lincoln-Douglas debates, Douglas quoted an 1856 speech from Matheny alleging that Lincoln and Lyman Trumbull had conspired to convert both major political parties to abolitionism.

Pierce, Franklin (1804–1869). Fourteenth President of the United States, 1853–1857. A Democrat who supported the Kansas-Nebraska Act. A vehement critic of Lincoln during the Civil War.

Polk, James K. (1795–1849). Eleventh President of the United States, 1845–1849. A Democrat, Polk was president during the Mexican War. Lincoln alleged that the war was begun unconstitutionally and challenged Polk's justification for war.

Robertson, George. A judge in Lexington, Kentucky, who had acted as counsel for Lincoln in a suit in the late 1840's. Robertson had been a member of Congress at the time of the Missouri Compromise.

Seward, William Henry (1801–1872). Former governor and U.S. Senator from New York, he was the frontrunner for the 1860 Republican nomination. He lost to Lincoln largely because of his reputation in the west as a radical.

Shields, James (1806–1879). U.S. Senator from Illinois, 1849–1854. A Democrat, he sought reelection; Lincoln sought his seat. Eventually both men were defeated by anti-Nebraska Democrat Lyman Trumbull.

Speed, Joshua (1814–1882). A fellow Kentuckian who was one of Lincoln's very few intimate friends.

Taney, Roger B. (1777–1864). Chief Justice of the United States, appointed by Andrew Jackson. Taney is most known for his authorship of the *Dred Scott* decision.

Trumbull, Lyman (1813–1896). Elected to the U.S. Senate in 1855 as an anti-Nebraska Democrat. Subsequently, he became a Republican and campaigned for Lincoln in the 1858 senate election. A political associate of Lincoln's.

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**Abraham Lincoln:
In His Own Words
Part II
Professor David Zarefsky**



THE TEACHING COMPANY ®

David Zarefsky, Ph.D.

Northwestern University

David Zarefsky received his B.S. (With Highest Distinction) from Northwestern University, and earned his master's and doctorate degrees also from Northwestern. He has taught at Northwestern for over thirty years and has been the Dean of the School of Speech since 1988.

Dr. Zarefsky has served as President of the National Communication Association (NCA), one of the nation's oldest and largest professional organizations for scholars, teachers, and practitioners in communication and performance studies.

A prolific writer, Dr. Zarefsky has authored five books and edited three more and has an impressive list of scholarly articles and reviews to his credit. He received the 1986 NCA Winans-Wichelns Award in Distinguished Scholarship in Rhetoric and Public Address for his book *President Johnson's War on Poverty: Rhetoric and History* and the same award again in 1991 for *Lincoln, Douglas and Slavery: In the Crucible of Public Debate*. He is one of only two people to have received this prestigious award twice.

A nationally recognized authority on rhetoric and forensics, Dr. Zarefsky maintains a busy schedule as a member of external review committees for departments of speech communication or communications studies at various universities. He is a member of the national advisory board and steering committee of the Center of Presidential Studies established at Texas A & M University in conjunction with the George Bush Presidential Library.

Dr. Zarefsky has been elected to the Northwestern University's Associated Student Government Honor Roll for Teaching on twelve occasions.

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Abraham Lincoln: In His Own Words

Scope:

This series of twenty-four lectures examines the rhetoric of Abraham Lincoln—the public messages in which Lincoln evolved his views on slavery and the Union and by which he sought to persuade others. Rhetoric is the study of the available means of persuasion in a given case. By tracing significant moments in Lincoln's career from the standpoint of public persuasion, we will explore how Lincoln navigated the constraints posed by his audiences and situations and how he took advantage of creative opportunities.

The first lecture introduces the nature of rhetoric and the contributions of a rhetorical perspective to the study of Abraham Lincoln. It then reviews the basic details of Lincoln's biography. Lectures Two through Four examine cases of Lincoln's early speaking, before the slavery issue called him fairly steadily to the public forum. Lecture Two considers one of Lincoln's earliest speeches, his 1838 address to the Young Men's Lyceum of Springfield. It explores the political responsibility of the current generation to the founders, and it can be read on multiple levels. So can the 1842 speech to the Washington Temperance Society of Springfield, which is the subject of Lecture Three. This speech can be seen as a speech about drunkenness, or about the place of moderation in Lincoln's political philosophy, or about Lincoln's approach to persuasion in general. Finally, Lecture Four addresses two Lincoln speeches—one in Congress, in opposition to the Mexican War, and one a eulogy for Henry Clay. These two speeches show Lincoln's advocacy as a young but devoted Whig.

The next four lectures—Lectures Five through Eight—focus on Lincoln's public advocacy after the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854 brought him from private life back into the public forum. Lincoln especially was concerned that this act reversed the historical presumption that slavery eventually must die. Lecture Five surveys the background of the Compromise of 1850, the Kansas-Nebraska Act, and the controversy surrounding the Lecompton constitution in Kansas. Then Lecture Six concentrates on Lincoln's 1854 Peoria speech, the most complete early exposition of his beliefs about slavery and the Union. Lecture Seven traces evolutions in Lincoln's beliefs in letters and speeches during 1855 and 1856 and explains how the *Dred Scott* decision of 1857 created rhetorical problems not only for Lincoln but also for Stephen A. Douglas. Lincoln's initial response to the *Dred Scott* decision was a speech he delivered in June of 1857, which is the central concern of Lecture Eight.

The next group of lectures, Nine through Sixteen, follows Lincoln through the year 1858, the most critical year both for the evolution of his political position and his search for a rhetorical voice in which to embody it. Lecture Nine addresses the "House Divided" speech and explains that it was not meant as a forecast of civil war but as a prediction that the country was moving toward national slavery. Senator Douglas responded to that speech on July 9 and Lincoln answered him on July 10, in a speech that is a focal point of Lecture Ten. The two candidates then traveled downstate. Douglas spoke at Bloomington on July 16; Lincoln was present and followed Douglas to Springfield on the 17th, when he responded to the speech Douglas had given in Bloomington. This Springfield speech is the topic of Lecture Eleven. Lincoln was beginning to be ridiculed for depending on Douglas to attract his crowds. He therefore decided to challenge Douglas to a series of debates, and Lecture Twelve describes the resulting "debate about the debates."

Lectures Thirteen through Sixteen follow the seven debates, with special attention to Lincoln's choices of arguments and of persuasive strategies and tactics. The lectures suggest that, while Douglas maintained the same very basic position throughout the debates, Lincoln's position evolved and he captured the momentum. Nevertheless, Douglas won the election, at least in part by convincing listeners that Lincoln was a dangerous radical. Although the central issue was the morality of permitting slavery to spread to the territories, little of the debate time focused on that. Instead the debates are made up of a variety of conspiracy, legal, and historical arguments.

The next three lectures, Seventeen through Nineteen, trace the path between the debates and the presidency. Lecture Seventeen explores Lincoln's speaking during 1859, both a lecture he had developed on "Discoveries and Inventions" and speeches he gave while on tour in Ohio. The 1860 address at Cooper Union, which Lincoln reportedly said is what made him president, will receive special attention in Lecture Eighteen. During the campaign itself, Lincoln made almost no formal speeches, referring questioners to his earlier speeches and to the debates with Douglas. En route to Washington, however, he made a number of short speeches, some of which were ceremonial, that hinted at the policy he would follow.

The final lectures, Twenty through Twenty-Four, are devoted to Lincoln's presidential rhetoric. Lecture Twenty is concerned with Lincoln's First Inaugural Address, in which he defined the North as being defensive and reactive. In Lecture Twenty-One, the focus shifts to the ways in which Lincoln's July 1861 address to a joint session of Congress frames the conflict as one instigated by rebellious Southerners rather than one grounded in constitutional principle. As the war went on, many people's sense of the war's aims became more radicalized; larger aims would help to justify the terrible sacrifice they already had endured. During 1862, Lincoln moved gingerly toward abolition while still publicly supporting colonization as his preferred solution. In Lecture Twenty-Two, this move will be traced through a series of letters and documents. Finally, Lecture Twenty-Three will consider Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, and Lecture Twenty-Four will examine the Second Inaugural Address as well as Lincoln's last speech.

This series of lectures should shed new light on Abraham Lincoln by employing a rhetorical lens. They also should reveal how heavily Lincoln's public career developed through public speeches and writings. And they should remind us of the importance of thinking rhetorically, reasoning with specific audiences and situations in mind.

Lecture Thirteen

The Lincoln-Douglas Debates I

Scope: Douglas opened the first debate on a strong note, charging that Lincoln's "house divided" doctrine would mandate national uniformity and alleging that he was part of a plot to abolitionize both major parties. He posed several specific questions to try to tie Lincoln to a radical Republican platform. Lincoln answered defensively and had difficulty establishing his own position. At Freeport, in the second debate, Lincoln answered Douglas's questions and posed four of his own. A legend has developed about Lincoln's motives for the second question. This lecture will review the course of the argument in the first two debates.

Outline

- I. Ottawa was the site of the first Lincoln-Douglas debate.
 - A. The town was solidly Republican.
 - B. Douglas sought to isolate Lincoln from the political mainstream.
 1. He charged that Lincoln and Lyman Trumbull were in a conspiracy to convert the two major parties to abolitionism.
 2. He sought to associate Lincoln with a radical Republican platform written in 1854.
 3. He charged that Lincoln's position amounted to advocating uniformity among the states.
 - C. Lincoln sought to deny Douglas's charges.
 1. He denied a conspiracy with Trumbull and tried to place the burden of proof on Douglas.
 2. He denied having any role in the 1854 platform or even being present at the convention held in Springfield that wrote it.
 3. He tried to identify his position with that of the Founding Fathers.
 - D. Going on the offensive, Lincoln repeated the charge that Douglas was part of a plot to nationalize slavery, reprising line-for-line the "frame-house" analogy from the "House Divided" speech.
 1. He stressed Douglas's role in molding public sentiment, allegedly to prepare it for a second *Dred Scott* decision making slavery legal everywhere.
 2. Douglas had said that he "didn't care" if slavery was voted up or down in the territories.
 3. Lincoln pointed out that since Douglas now viewed Supreme Court decisions as "sacred," that he must be ready to give the same obeisance to "*Dred Scott II*."
 4. He challenged Douglas to deny the charge, since Douglas had heretofore simply ignored it. Lincoln here imposes a double standard regarding burden of proof.
 - E. The debate introduces each candidate's views on racial equality.
 1. Douglas asserts that blacks are inferior to whites.
 2. Lincoln qualifies his answer, noting that there are some respects in which the two races are equal.
- II. Lincoln did not do as well as had been anticipated in the Ottawa debate. He didn't even use up all of his allotted speaking time.
 - A. Different newspapers presented very different views of what had happened.
 - B. Republicans were worried about Lincoln's strategy.
 1. They did not think he was going on the offensive enough.
 2. State party leaders sent Lincoln a letter offering advice before the next debate. Joseph Medill, editor of the *Chicago Tribune*, was one signatory.
 3. Lincoln took their advice to heart.
- III. The second Lincoln-Douglas debate was held in Freeport.
 - A. This was the most solidly Republican town of all seven of the debate sites.
 - B. Some topics and arguments were repeated from Ottawa.
 1. One example is the dispute over the 1854 platform protest. Douglas ridicules Lincoln's protest that he was not "on the spot" so to speak.
 2. Douglas answers the "frame-house" charge.

- C. Some topics from the Ottawa debate drop out at Freeport.
- D. The Freeport debate focuses on interrogatories.
 - 1. Lincoln, acting in accord with the letter of advice he had received from the leading Illinois Republicans, answers the seven questions Douglas had propounded at Ottawa.
 - 2. He often does so on narrow and legalistic grounds.
 - 3. Lincoln, in turn, puts four questions to Douglas, of which numbers two and four are the most important.
 - 4. Douglas answers the four interrogatories and Lincoln does not respond.
- E. Considerable folklore has developed with respect to Lincoln's second interrogatory.
 - 1. This question asked: Can the people of a U.S. territory, prior to the formation of a state constitution, exclude slavery against the will of any individual (slaveholder)?
 - 2. It is widely believed that Lincoln knew that Douglas's affirmative answer would enable him to win the Senate race but that it would make him unelectable as president.
 - 3. The available evidence does not support this speculation. Lincoln's purpose was probably something quite different.
 - 4. Lincoln's second interrogatory was meant to expose the contradiction that Lincoln found between Douglas's support for popular sovereignty and *Dred Scott*. Douglas's answer was that a territory's people could simply exclude slavery by omission, i.e., by failing to pass "friendly local legislation" (a code word for laws permitting slavery).
 - 5. Lincoln's third question was intended to get Douglas to swear fealty to any future Supreme Court decision (including, presumptively, Lincoln's projected *Dred Scott II*).
- F. Following the Freeport debate, Lincoln still appeared to be on the defensive.

Essential Reading (one of the following):

Paul M. Angle, *The Complete Lincoln-Douglas Debates*, pp. 102–176.

Harold Holzer, *The Lincoln-Douglas Debates*, pp. 40–135.

Lincoln: Speeches and Writings, vol. 1, pp. 495–536, 537–580.

Supplementary Reading:

David Zarefsky, *Lincoln, Douglas, and Slavery*, pp. 55–58.

Don E. Fehrenbacher, *Prelude to Greatness*, chapter 6.

Saul Sigelschiffer, *The American Conscience*, chapters 7–8.

David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln*, pp. 215–220.

Questions to Consider:

- 1. How plausible were the conspiracy charges developed in the Ottawa debate?
- 2. To what extent did either set of interrogatories contribute to public understanding of the issues?

Lecture Fourteen

The Lincoln-Douglas Debates II

Scope: Douglas had expected to do well in the third debate, held in heavily Democratic southern Illinois (“lower Egypt,” in Douglas’s words). But Lincoln arrested his momentum and posed a fifth question that forced Douglas to state whether he would support territorial legislation to protect slavery. The fourth (Charleston) debate is unlike any of the others. Following Lincoln’s opening disavowal of racial equality, it is devoted to an elaborate argument that Douglas plotted to deny Kansas the chance to vote on slavery even while claiming to champion popular sovereignty. This lecture will analyze arguments in the third and fourth debates.

Outline

- I. Lincoln arrests Douglas’s momentum in the Jonesboro debate.
 - A. He refutes the charge of conspiracy between himself and Lyman Trumbull to abolitionize the two parties and create a sectional party. Douglas nonetheless would repeat this charge in subsequent lectures.
 - B. He develops a frontal attack on Douglas’s claim about “friendly local legislation” and points out inconsistencies in Douglas’s argument.
 1. Douglas had asserted that territories effectively could bar slavery by refusing to pass such legislation (notwithstanding the effect of *Dred Scott*).
 2. Lincoln suggested that history denied this claim, by citing the eponymous Dred Scott’s experience of being held in bondage in the free state of Minnesota.
 3. He also asked whether Douglas would consider himself obliged to support such legislation, in light of his senatorial oath of office. This is a fifth interrogatory.
 4. Douglas’s answer that he wouldn’t interfere with such legislation did damage to him in the south.
 5. By pushing this line of attack, Lincoln effectively took away Douglas’s middle ground.
 - C. Some allegations advanced in earlier debates begin to recede into the background.
- II. Lincoln begins the Charleston debate with a statement of his views on racial equality, which had created the impression that Lincoln was a radical.
 - A. It was a response to adverse publicity from earlier debates.
 - B. Lincoln denied that he believed in racial equality.
 1. He did this to repair political damage done on this score.
 2. We would consider Lincoln’s statement to be racist.
 - C. He concluded, however, that there were specific rights that blacks enjoyed on an equal footing with whites.
- III. The rest of the Charleston debate was devoted to an elaborate and exotic conspiracy claim, first advanced by Lyman Trumbull.
 - A. The charge is that Douglas, while championing popular sovereignty, conspired to deny Kansas an opportunity to vote on the state constitution.
 1. If Lincoln could make this stick, it would show Douglas to be hypocritical.
 2. It would also show popular sovereignty to be a pretext for the expansion of slavery.
 3. The so-called “plot” involved a bill introduced in 1846 by Senator Toombs of Georgia that provided for a referendum vote by the people of Kansas.
 4. Douglas removed the clause and inserted one preventing the vote.
 5. Even though Douglas removed the second clause also, and the bill did not pass in any case, Lincoln still made an issue of it.
 - B. On its face, this allegation seems far-fetched, but it manages to weaken Douglas’s position by creating doubt.
 - C. Clashes between Lincoln and Douglas develop at certain junctures in the conspiracy argument.
 1. There is clash over whether Douglas really removed the offending clause from the document.
 2. There is clash over whether Trumbull was involved in the plot.

- 3. There is clash over whether Trumbull's evidence was forged.
- D. Douglas attacks Lincoln for advancing the conspiracy charge but he does not try to deny completely the factual claim.
- E. This would be the last substantial development of conspiracy arguments in the debate series.

Essential Reading (one of the following):

Paul M. Angle, *The Complete Lincoln-Douglas Debates*, pp. 189–275.

Harold Holzer, *The Lincoln-Douglas Debates*, pp. 136–233.

Lincoln: Speeches and Writings, vol. 1, pp. 586–634, 636–684.

Supplementary Reading:

David Zarefsky, *Lincoln, Douglas, and Slavery*, pp. 58–62.

Saul Sigelschiffer, *The American Conscience*, chapters 9–10.

David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln*, pp. 220–221.

Questions to Consider:

- 1. Did Douglas succeed in his plan to “trot [Lincoln] down to Egypt”?
- 2. Was Lincoln wise in devoting so much of the Charleston debate to a single conspiracy charge?

Lecture Fifteen

The Lincoln-Douglas Debates III

Scope: Lincoln found his stride in the last three debates. He derived the nationalization of slavery from a formal logical structure rather than from an alleged conspiracy, and he finally introduced the basic moral argument that slavery was wrong. Whereas Lincoln's positions advanced from the beginning of the debates to the end, Douglas tended to repeat the same arguments he had put forward in the earlier debates. This lecture will examine the fifth and sixth debates between Lincoln and Douglas.

Outline

- I. In the Galesburg debate, Lincoln advances his previous arguments.
 - A. He modifies his conspiracy claim.
 - 1. Douglas is portrayed not as an active conspirator but as an unwitting dupe.
 - 2. Lincoln deduces a second *Dred Scott* decision by syllogistic reasoning, thus strengthening his argument.
 - 3. Douglas's role (as a dupe) is to prepare public opinion for such a future decision.
 - B. He advances his moral claim (viz., that blacks are included in the Declaration of Independence).
 - 1. He contrasts this with Douglas's position.
 - 2. Lincoln now defines the central issue: Slavery is wrong.
 - 3. He was able to do this now because he had blunted the charge that he was an abolitionist in the Charleston debate.
 - C. He objects to Douglas's answer to his fifth interrogatory from the Jonesboro debate.
 - D. He defends himself against Douglas's charge that he is inconsistent and "sectional" in his positions in different parts of the state.
 - 1. He denies it.
 - 2. He says sectionalism is the wrong standard to use.
 - 3. He makes the same charge against Douglas.
 - E. He denies several arguments advanced by Douglas.
 - 1. He denies that the Compromise of 1850 reflects any principle.
 - 2. He denies that the Kansas-Nebraska Act is consistent with the Compromise of 1850.
 - 3. He denies that he is in a conspiracy with Buchanan loyalists.
 - F. He turns the tables on Douglas's argument about the 1854 Republican platform.
 - 1. The resolutions (pertaining to a Lincoln-Trumbull conspiracy) are fraudulent.
 - 2. Douglas, in proclaiming them so, must have been involved in a plan to perpetrate them.
 - 3. Lincoln then turns the argument to put the burden of proof on Douglas.
- II. Lincoln advances his moral claim in the sixth, or Quincy, debate just a few days later. This debate shows Lincoln bringing his argument to a peak.
 - A. He focused his own positions on the morality of slavery.
 - 1. He declares slavery to be a moral, social, and political wrong.
 - 2. He suggests that its natural tendency is to expand.
 - 3. He calls, therefore, for a policy of containment.
 - 4. He maintains that, with containment, slavery will die a natural death.
 - B. He identifies the moral dimension of Douglas's popular sovereignty.
 - 1. This view excludes the notion that slavery is wrong.
 - 2. It therefore permits the indefinite perpetuation of slavery.
 - 3. This puts Douglas out in an extreme (moral) position.
 - C. Lincoln extends his advantage on other issues.
 - 1. He demolishes Douglas's "friendly local legislation" argument on popular sovereignty as nullifying a constitutional right.
 - 2. He answers Douglas's charge that his Chicago and Charleston speeches were inconsistent.

3. He reminds listeners that Douglas had said, in the Freeport speech, that he would conduct an investigation into the 1854 Republican platform, but had not done so.
 4. He challenges Douglas to show where in the *Dred Scott* decision the Supreme Court justices deny intent to put forth a second decision prohibiting states from outlawing slavery.
- D. Douglas fails to recover or regain the advantage.
1. He will not answer whether he regards slavery as right or wrong.
 2. He charges that Lincoln will end slavery by starvation of the slaves, but fails to develop or explain this potentially interesting argument.
 3. He is unable to find where the Supreme Court justices disavow a second *Dred Scott* decision.
 4. On other matters he repeats his previous position, ignoring Lincoln's response.

Essential Reading (one of the following):

Paul M. Angle, *The Complete Lincoln-Douglas Debates*, pp. 285–360.

Harold Holzer, *The Lincoln-Douglas Debates*, pp. 234–320.

Lincoln: Speeches and Writings, vol. 1, pp. 687–773.

Supplementary Reading:

David Zarefsky, *Lincoln, Douglas, and Slavery*, pp. 62–64.

Saul Sigelschiffer, *The American Conscience*, chapters 11–12.

David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln*, pp. 221–223.

Questions to Consider:

1. How might Douglas have responded to Lincoln's increasing emphasis on the moral argument?
2. Does the momentum in the debates shift from Douglas to Lincoln? Why or why not?

Lecture Sixteen

The Aftermath of the Debates

Scope: The final debate was anticlimactic for Douglas but it enabled Lincoln to sharpen his moral argument. Following the debates, the last few weeks of the campaign were marked by a key last-minute endorsement for Douglas and by charges of vote fraud. Douglas was reelected to the Senate, although it is likely that candidates pledged to Lincoln had the larger popular vote. Certainly Lincoln was not harmed by the results of the election.

Outline

- I. Although otherwise anticlimactic, the Alton debate enabled Lincoln to sharpen his attacks on Douglas and to synthesize his positions. Some of the most memorable lines from Lincoln come from this speech.
 - A. He sharpens his attack on Douglas.
 1. He noted that Douglas had spent more time attacking the Buchanan administration than him.
 2. He ridicules Douglas for inconsistencies.
 3. Lincoln really pressed his attack, showing a growth from the defensive earliest debates.
 4. Lincoln even manages to turn the abolition argument around and make Douglas himself look like an abolitionist.
 - B. He presents a fully developed moral argument (“slavery is wrong”) and identifies it as the central issue of the campaign.
 - C. He links the moral position specifically to the policy of prohibiting slavery in the territories.
 1. He denies that it is just an issue of concern to those living in the territories.
 2. He claims that the lands are a national resource that must be held in trust for taking in surplus population, not only of free white Americans, but free white men from Europe.
 - D. He links his position historically to the Founding Fathers and to Henry Clay.
 1. The Founding Fathers expected and intended that slavery would come to an end. This was Lincoln’s position (although he didn’t say how or when).
 2. Lincoln invoked Clay because the area around Alton was populated by mostly old-line Whigs. Thus, an appeal to the great statesman would resonate.
 - E. He uses the concept of “the public mind” to reconcile broad moral condemnation with limited practical action.
 1. He likens slavery to a cancer on the body.
 2. It has to be curbed and ultimately die out, but to remove it outright might cause too much harm to the body.
 - F. Lincoln also attacks Douglas for professing not to “care about” the very thing (i.e., the extension of slavery into the territories) that everybody is most interested in since the Kansas-Nebraska Act and *Dred Scott*.
 - G. Douglas repeated claims he had made in earlier debates without extending the arguments, despite the fact that Lincoln has already dealt effectively with these arguments in earlier lectures.
 1. Douglas can be seen as being consistent—and constant—throughout the debates.
 2. Lincoln, in contrast, starts out on the defensive, stops Douglas’s momentum in the middle lectures, and at Galesburg and Quincy moves forward sharply, finishing up at Alton.
- II. The senatorial campaign, although a victory for Douglas, also was beneficial to Lincoln.
 - A. The campaign went on for three more weeks and ended on a discordant note.
 1. An endorsement of Douglas by John J. Crittenden, Henry Clay’s successor, was publicized.
 2. Republican papers charged that slaves were mistreated on a plantation owned by Douglas’s wife and son.
 3. Lincoln was portrayed as a Know-Nothing in an attempt to reduce the German-American vote for the Republicans.
 4. Republicans charged that there was vote fraud by the Irish.
 5. Buchanan charged that Douglas had quit the Democratic Party.

- B. Lincoln was upset with the tenor of the campaign.
 - 1. Lincoln's last campaign speech was in Springfield on 30 October.
 - 2. He noted the scurrilous attacks against him, including the charge that he was an "ambitious" man.
- C. The results of the election on 2 November were ambiguous.
 - 1. Statewide Republican candidates received more popular votes than Democrats.
 - 2. Douglas won the larger number of electoral districts, 54–46. Not all legislators were up for election and this tended to favor Douglas.
 - 3. Douglas carried two-thirds of the critical swing vote in the middle part of the state, probably by creating the impression there that Lincoln was a radical.
- D. Douglas's victory proved Pyrrhic as southern Democrats in the Senate stripped him of his committee chairmanship.
- E. Lincoln lost the election but had gained valuable publicity and recognition.

Essential Reading (first entry and one of the other entries):

Roy P. Basler, *Abraham Lincoln: His Speeches and Writings*, pp. 480–481.

Paul M. Angle, *The Complete Lincoln-Douglas Debates*, pp. 361–408.

Harold Holzer, *The Lincoln-Douglas Debates*, pp. 321–370.

Lincoln: Speeches and Writings, vol. 1, pp. 774–824.

Supplementary Reading:

David Zarefsky, *Lincoln, Douglas, and Slavery*, pp. 64–67 and chapter 7.

Saul Sigelschiffer, *The American Conscience*, chapters 13–14.

David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln*, pp. 223–229.

Questions to Consider:

- 1. Which candidate gained more from the Lincoln-Douglas debates?
- 2. How might Douglas more effectively have replied to Lincoln's moral argument at Alton?

Lecture Seventeen

Lincoln's 1859 Speeches

Scope: After his defeat in 1858, Lincoln returned to his law practice, but he also remained active on the speaking circuit. He developed a lecture on discoveries and inventions. Although the lecture in some respects is unremarkable, parts of it can be read symbolically as reflecting the position of the two major political parties. Both Lincoln and Douglas also campaigned for candidates in the Ohio State elections of 1859. Lincoln's Ohio speeches can be seen as the natural extension of the Lincoln-Douglas debates. The arguments developed in the debates appear in a more fully developed form. This lecture will examine both "Discoveries and Inventions" and Lincoln's Columbus speech.

Outline

- I. "Discoveries and Inventions" was Lincoln's best-known lecture during 1859.
 - A. On the surface, this lecture is nonpolitical.
 - 1. This speech is often omitted from anthologies of Lincoln's speeches.
 - 2. Lincoln claims in this speech that humankind has benefited from discoveries and inventions that are the result of the contributions of earlier generations.
 - B. In fact, the speech has clear political implications and can be seen as representing Lincoln, Douglas, and the slavery question.
 - 1. The conflict between discovery and tradition reshapes the role of the Founding Fathers as an influence on the present.
 - 2. The contrast of "Young America" and "Old Fogy" (i.e., the Founding Fathers) is a critique of Douglas.
 - 3. "Young America" was a popular political movement in the 1840s, promoting Manifest Destiny. Douglas was a proponent of the Young America movement.
 - 4. Lincoln describes the impulses of the Young America movement in expanding into the territories.
 - C. The advantages of the present over the past are attributed to the discoveries and inventions of the past.
 - 1. He doesn't specifically name the Founding Fathers, but does cite Adam in the Garden of Eden.
 - 2. He mentions the development of human speech, writing, the printing press, the discovery of America, and patent laws as examples of such advances.
 - 3. All these are related to communication and/or intellectual property.
 - D. Lincoln makes passing references to the Lutheran Reformation (1517) and the inception of Negro slavery (1434).
 - 1. He states that they are not apposite to his current purposes in the speech.
 - 2. He felt that the Lutheran Reformation was responsible for the religious wars that plagued Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.
 - 3. Similarly, he opined that Negro slavery was the cause of the current dissension facing the nation.
 - E. Although Lincoln presented this lecture repeatedly, it did not establish him as a popular lecturer; nor did it displace the slavery issue.
- II. Lincoln's defeat in 1858 did not end his concern with the slavery issue.
 - A. He deepened his understanding of slavery in the early history of the country.
 - B. Media coverage allowed his arguments from the debates to spread widely and to be used by others.
 - C. Lincoln traveled extensively, giving speeches that elaborated his position from the debates.
 - 1. These speeches reduced the risk that Republicans would succumb to popular sovereignty.
 - 2. They established Lincoln's antislavery position as conservative (consistent with the Founding Fathers'), yet resting on a firm moral foundation.
 - D. Among these speaking tours was one in Ohio in the fall of 1859.
 - 1. Both Lincoln and Douglas campaigned for state candidates.
 - 2. Lincoln spoke at Columbus and Cincinnati.

III. Lincoln's Columbus speech extends and refines his position from the 1858 debates.

- A.** As at Charleston, he disclaims any commitment to racial equality.
 - 1. He quoted from partisan Democratic newspapers (which actually misrepresented his position), then reasserted where he stood.
 - 2. He repeated that he was not in favor of Negro suffrage or other types of political equality.
- B.** He presents popular sovereignty as a morally reprehensible position that will revive the slave trade and pave the way for a second *Dred Scott* decision.
 - 1. He contends that Douglas has dehumanized the Negro.
 - 2. He maintains that Douglas has influenced others to believe as he does.
 - 3. He charges Douglas with trivializing the issue of slavery.
 - 4. He predicts that this change in the public mind will (logically) lead to nationalized slavery and the revival of the slave trade.
 - 5. He argues that America is already on that path since the Kansas-Nebraska Act.
- C.** He distinguishes Douglas's version of popular sovereignty from the true meaning of the term.
- D.** He offers a detailed historical analysis.
 - 1. The period from 1776 to 1820 is seen as one of relative peace about the slavery issue.
 - 2. The reason is that the nation agreed on the policy of restricting slavery (e.g., in the Northwest Territory).
 - 3. The actions of the Founders contradict the views Douglas attributes to them.
- E.** He alleges that Douglas has retreated from his Freeport position and now says that territories cannot prevent slavery. Put another way, "a thing can be driven out of a place where it has a lawful right to be."
 - 1. Lincoln interprets the *Dred Scott* decision in this way.
 - 2. He suggests that Douglas would be obligated to support "friendly local legislation."
- F.** This speech reflects Lincoln's reading of history and previews the Cooper Union address.

Essential Reading:

Lincoln: Speeches and Writings, vol. 2, pp. 3–11, 31–58.

Supplementary Reading:

David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln*, pp. 230–238.

Questions to Consider:

- 1. What, if any, is the political dimension of the speech on "discoveries and inventions"?
- 2. In what ways does Lincoln's Columbus speech move beyond the position he took in the debates with Douglas?

Lecture Eighteen

The Cooper Union Speech, 1860

Scope: At the close of a New England tour, Lincoln spoke at Cooper Union in New York City—in effect meeting presidential frontrunner William H. Seward on Seward’s home ground. Lincoln took as his text a statement by Douglas that the nation’s Founders understood the slavery question better than those currently on the scene. He offered evidence that a majority of the Founders believed that Congress had the power to outlaw slavery in the territories, then concluded that Congress should exercise that power. A portion of the speech ostensibly is directed to the South although it is likely that the true audience is the North. This lecture will analyze the Cooper Union speech.

Outline

- I. Lincoln’s invitation to speak at Cooper Union reflected his growing political influence.
 - A. He was invited by an anti-Seward organization that was attracted to his position in the Douglas debates.
 - B. He had an opportunity to compare himself to Seward on Seward’s home ground.
 - C. Lincoln claimed to have prepared for this speech more than any other and believed that it resulted in his subsequent nomination for the presidency.
- II. The Cooper Union speech develops an elaborate historical argument (previewed at Columbus, Lecture Seventeen, q.v.)
 - A. The “text” is a line from Douglas’s recent article in *Harper’s* about the superior wisdom of the Founding Fathers.
 - 1. In this article, Douglas tried to show that his popular sovereignty stance was consistent with that of the Founding Fathers.
 - 2. Lincoln agreed with Douglas’s assertion that the Founders understood the issue of slavery at least as well as, if not better than, the present generation.
 - 3. He was able to use Douglas’s statement against him in the speech.
 - B. Lincoln establishes that the Founders believed in the congressional power to restrict slavery.
 - 1. Twenty-three of the thirty-nine signers of the Constitution are on record to this effect.
 - 2. The other sixteen can be presumed to have the same view, based on their actions in other matters.
 - 3. The very same Congress that passed the Fifth Amendment, on which *Dred Scott* is based, passed the Northwest Ordinance, outlawing slavery in the Northwest Territory.
 - 4. In fact, there had been three separate votes on the Northwest Ordinance under the Articles of Confederation (1784 and 1787) and then under the Constitution (1789).
 - 5. This understanding of legislative power had stood until the recent Kansas-Nebraska controversy.
 - C. Lincoln portrays his position as conservative, perhaps implying a difference from Seward, the Republican frontrunner.
 - 1. In an earlier speech, Seward had proclaimed an “irrepressible conflict” between freedom and slavery.
 - 2. This made him seem radical; Lincoln was able to present himself as more moderate.
 - D. The second section of the speech ostensibly is directed to the people of the South.
 - 1. The true audience probably was in the North.
 - 2. Lincoln refutes the claims that Republicans are a sectional party and that they are radical.
 - 3. Lincoln denies that Republicans are behind slave insurrections (e.g., John Brown’s abortive raid on Harper’s Ferry, which Lincoln pointed out was not a slave uprising at all).
 - 4. Lincoln reduces secession threats to the principle of “rule or ruin.”
 - 5. This shows him to be as strong an anti-slavery man as Seward.
 - E. Lincoln offers advice to Republicans.
 - 1. He urges moderation, consistent with his political philosophy (cf., the Temperance Speech, Lecture Three).
 - 2. He urges resistance to Douglas’s siren song of “don’t care” on the issue of slavery in the territories.

III. The speech is sometimes interpreted in the context of Lincoln's strategic purposes.

- A.** It can be interpreted as a campaign speech in which Lincoln promotes his own candidacy over those of Seward and Douglas.
- B.** It can be interpreted as an effort to give direction to the Republican Party.

Essential Reading (one of the following):

Roy P. Basler, *Abraham Lincoln: His Speeches and Writings*, pp. 517–539.

Lincoln: Speeches and Writings, vol. 2, pp. 111–130.

Supplementary Reading:

David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln*, pp. 238–241.

Questions to Consider:

1. How convincingly does Lincoln's historical evidence establish his claim that Congress should outlaw slavery in the territories?
2. What about the Cooper Union speech would make Lincoln seem more attractive as a candidate for the Presidency?

Lecture Nineteen

The Campaign of 1860

Scope: Lincoln gave no speeches during the presidential campaign, believing that his views already were on the record and that his opponents would distort his positions. This lecture will explore the nature and consequences of Lincoln's "eloquent silence." It also will examine his brief farewell speech to his Springfield neighbors and several speeches he made en route to Washington for the presidential inauguration.

Outline

- I. The election of 1860 was unusually complex.
 - A. The Democratic Party split over the issue of extending slavery into the territories.
 1. Douglas had a majority of the delegates but fewer than the two-thirds required for nomination under the party rules of the time.
 2. Douglas would not agree to the Alabama Resolutions, and so lost support from southern delegates.
 3. If Douglas could not be nominated, neither could anyone else.
 4. Douglas emerged as the candidate of the northern Democrats.
 5. John C. Breckinridge, Buchanan's vice-president, became the candidate of the southern Democrats.
 - B. Lincoln received the Republican nomination at the convention in Chicago.
 1. To win the election, Republicans had to hold the states carried by Fremont in 1856 and had to carry the states (especially New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Indiana, and Illinois) that they had lost in 1856 because they seemed too radical.
 2. This criterion eliminated the frontrunner, Seward, whose "irrepressible conflict" speech came back to haunt him.
 3. Other leading candidates (e.g., Simon Cameron of Pennsylvania and Edward Bates of Missouri) ultimately were also unattractive.
 4. Lincoln was seen as both moderate and electable.
 - C. The Constitutional Union Party nominated John Bell of Tennessee.
 - D. The campaign was largely sectional and really amounted to two simultaneous, two-way races.
 1. The northern race was between Lincoln and Douglas.
 2. The southern race was between Breckinridge and Bell.
 3. Breaking precedent, Douglas campaigned in the South, probably knowing that he could not win there, in order to prevent a disunion majority.
 - E. As was typical for that era, Lincoln made no speeches during the campaign.
 1. He did publish the text of his debates with Douglas.
 2. He took his speeches from Republican papers and Douglas's from Democratic papers, did some editing, and then published the speeches.
 - F. Lincoln had a clear electoral vote majority, although he won only thirty-nine percent of the popular vote.
 1. He won decisively in the North.
 2. Breckenridge carried the South.
- II. On 11 February 1861, Lincoln delivered a brief farewell to his neighbors in Springfield. This was his first public pronouncement since his election.
 - A. The speech contains nine sentences.
 1. The first four strengthen Lincoln's connection to place and the difficulty of parting.
 2. The last four appeal to the deity and show increasing confidence in God's grace.
 - B. This structure is called *chiasmus* and the middle sentence (the fifth) is the climax.
 1. It suggests a general sense of melancholy and perhaps a portent of death.
 2. The comparison of Lincoln's task to Washington's is true but double-edged (cf., his Lyceum speech on "ambitious men").

- III. En route to Washington for his inauguration, Lincoln delivered several brief speeches.
- A. In Indianapolis, he denied that he favored coercion or invasion of the South.
 - 1. His policy was only to hold federal forts and maintain federal services, such as postal and customs operations, per the Constitution.
 - 2. By asking rhetorical questions, Lincoln suggested that a state did not have the power to secede.
 - B. In Cincinnati the next day, he defended his policy of silence during the campaign.
 - C. Speaking to the New Jersey State legislature in Trenton, he compared the current crisis with the Revolution.
 - D. In Philadelphia, speaking at Independence Hall, he elaborated on the same theme.
 - 1. He said that his political sentiments sprang from the Declaration of Independence.
 - 2. He defines the “original idea” as the promise of liberty to the whole world.
 - 3. He begins to position himself as supporting self-defense but not aggressive war.
 - 4. He closes with a reference to assassination.

Essential Reading (one of the following):

Roy P. Basler, *Abraham Lincoln: His Speeches and Writings*, pp. 568–579.

Lincoln: Speeches and Writings, vol. 2, pp. 199, 201–204, 209–210, 213–214.

Supplementary Reading:

Don E. Fehrenbacher, *Prelude to Greatness*, chapter 7.

———, *Lincoln in Text and Context*, chapters 5–6.

David Potter, *The Impending Crisis*, chapter 16.

David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln*, pp. 241–282.

Robert W. Johannsen, *Lincoln, the South, and Slavery*, chapter 4.

Questions to Consider:

- 1. Should Lincoln have made speeches during the 1860 presidential campaign?
- 2. To what degree did Lincoln’s speeches en route to Washington reveal the directions of his policy?

Lecture Twenty

The First Inaugural Address

Scope: Lincoln's First Inaugural is one of his most famous speeches. The new President suggests the impossibility of dividing the Union and appeals to the loyalty and good will of the South. He also defines his policy as purely defensive and suggests that, if war breaks out, the South will be the aggressor. Although the speech seeks reconciliation, southerners regarded it as a siren song. This lecture will explore Lincoln's rhetorical moves in the First Inaugural Address.

Outline

- I. Lincoln's First Inaugural tries to define the ambiguous situation.
 - A. He wrote this speech in draft form in Springfield in January 1861 and modified it as he went east.
 - 1. Seven southern states had already passed resolutions of secession and had formed the Confederate States of America.
 - 2. Lincoln had to address the status of this group of breakaway states.
 - 3. He also had to establish where power and authority lay.
 - B. It says nothing about slavery itself as the essence of the problem, unlike in the Second Inaugural.
 - C. It defines the problem as "Southern apprehension" and insists that this is unjustified. He never refers to the "seceded" states as such.
 - 1. Lincoln appeals to his record to allay the South.
 - 2. Lincoln pledges to adhere to the Fugitive Slave Act, even though this law was abhorred in the North.
 - 3. He indicates that he will not oppose a Constitutional amendment guaranteeing southern slavery in perpetuity. Had it passed and been adopted by the states, it would have been the Thirteenth Amendment. Ironically, it was the Thirteenth Amendment that *abolished* slavery in the United States.
 - D. Lincoln maintains that secession is an impossibility and, because it is impossible, it didn't happen. The states were in a state of insurrection or rebellion.
 - 1. No government provides for its own destruction.
 - 2. If the Union is a compact, then *all* parties must consent to its termination.
 - 3. He also cites the foundation of the nation as predating the Constitution, going back to the First Continental Congress.
 - 4. Secession is the essence of anarchy. Any state votes of secession are null and void, because states cannot secede.
 - 5. He has no power to negotiate secession, even if he wanted to.
 - 6. He concluded that secession is physically impossible, because the states would still be contiguous.
 - E. Lincoln announces his intention to hold federal forts, putting any opponent into the role of aggressor.
 - 1. Union-loving southerners have nothing to fear.
 - 2. Disputes arise only over what is not spelled out in the Constitution (viz., the power to extend slavery into the territories).
 - 3. On these matters the majority must rule.
 - 4. He also takes the Supreme Court to task for, in essence, making laws via its decisions.
- II. The First Inaugural is strategically crafted.
 - A. It positions southerners as aggressors and Lincoln as acting only in self-defense.
 - B. It announced Lincoln's policy, while seeking to conciliate the South.
- III. The effort to conciliate was largely unsuccessful.
 - A. Southerners doubted the sincerity of the speech.
 - 1. They thought it was intended to lull them into complacency (there is more irony here; this was Lincoln's charge against Douglas during the debates).
 - 2. It brought Lincoln's character and credibility into dispute.
 - B. Southerners interpreted Lincoln's defensive stance as aggressive.

- C. Events were at a standstill until the threatened forts began to run low on food and supplies.
- D. The effort to provision the forts led to a southern attack on Fort Sumter in Charleston, SC, harbor on 12 April 1861, opening the Civil War.

Essential Reading (one of the following):

Roy P. Basler, *Abraham Lincoln: His Speeches and Writings*, pp. 579–590.

Lincoln: Speeches and Writings, vol. 2, pp. 215–224.

Supplementary Reading:

Waldo W. Braden, *Abraham Lincoln, Public Speaker*, chapter 5.

David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln*, pp. 282–292.

Bruce Levine, *Half Slave and Half Free*, chapter 10.

Questions to Consider:

1. How did Lincoln's First Inaugural Address define the situation facing the country at the time?
2. How, if at all, could the speech have been made more conciliatory to the South? Or was it overly conciliatory as it was?

Lecture Twenty-One

Justifying the War

Scope: The Civil War broke out while Congress was not in session. For the time being, Lincoln could make decisions unimpeded by legislation, but he needed congressional approval of funds to support the war. For this purpose he called Congress into special session on July 4, 1861. His message to Congress makes clear his war aims, which are much more limited and defensive than they soon will become. This lecture is devoted to Lincoln's rhetorical choices in his special message to Congress.

Outline

- I. Lincoln's address to Congress on July 4, 1861, presented him with a complex rhetorical task.
 - A. The war had begun while Congress was not in session, affording considerable latitude to the executive.
 - 1. He called for volunteers to suppress the rebellion.
 - 2. This led to four more states (most notably Virginia) to secede, bringing to eleven the number of states that had left the Union.
 - B. Congressional approval was needed to obtain appropriations to support the war.
 - C. Lincoln's justification of his policies must be persuasive to two very different audiences.
 - 1. It must articulate war aims so as to command support in the North.
 - 2. It must not alienate the border states (Maryland, Delaware, Kentucky, and Missouri) or provoke them into secession.
- II. Lincoln denies both the fact and the legality of secession.
 - A. He suggests that "the functions of the Federal Government were found to be generally suspended" in the South.
 - 1. Only the postal functions were being carried out.
 - 2. Federal forts had either been attacked or menaced.
 - 3. A sizeable quantity of muskets and other weapons and ordnance had somehow "found its way south."
 - 4. Government money had been sequestered.
 - B. He describes the Confederate States as an illegal organization, which had openly avowed its separation from the Union, claimed to be a government, and sought foreign recognition.
 - C. He refers to the state of affairs as "rebellion" rather than "secession" and justifies his choice of language.
 - 1. He asserts an insidious effort to "debauch the public mind."
 - 2. He calls their claims of legality to be sophistry and terms their actions to be treason.
 - D. He denies the legal and historical claims that the states enjoy supremacy over the Union.
 - 1. This line of argument builds on his First Inaugural Address.
 - 2. Lincoln says the colonies created the national union and the national union then created the states.
 - 3. This is really a modern, twentieth-century notion that holds that "the United States *is*" rather than "the United States *are*," which is how it was commonly phrased in Lincoln's day.
- III. Lincoln characterizes his war policy as defensive and the minimal assertion of federal power.
 - A. He explains why it was necessary to reinforce Fort Sumter.
 - 1. Evacuation would be misinterpreted unless Fort Pickens (near Pensacola, Florida) could be reinforced first.
 - 2. Reinforcement of Fort Pickens was not possible because of its distance from sources of supply.
 - 3. He notified the governor of South Carolina of his plans to reprovision Fort Sumter.
 - B. He characterizes the attack on Fort Sumter as aggression that forced on the country the "immediate issue: dissolution or blood."
 - C. He reprised the response to his call for volunteers (four more states left the Union).
 - 1. Again, he will not acknowledge secession.
 - 2. He uses the terms "so-called" to describe the Confederate States of America and the "border states."
 - D. He responds to criticism of his suspension of the right of *habeas corpus* in Maryland.

1. He uses the subjunctive mode: “if it was illegal . . .”
2. He argues that it was necessary for the survival of the Union in an emergency situation.
3. He asserts that the decision belongs to the President, not the Congress.

E. He believes that the conflict will be short and decisive if enough resources can be provided at the outset.

IV. Lincoln tries to unify public support in the North.

- A. He evokes a general public will in favor of the Union.
 1. This was a matter not susceptible to empirical confirmation.
 2. Lincoln’s invocation of a general public will was reminiscent of his appeal to “the public mind” in the debates.
 3. He describes the government as an experiment in which a union of states has been established and administered and now must be maintained.
- B. He identifies the source of the rebellion not as southern states but as individuals who are out of the mainstream.
 1. He describes the people of the South as victims of the secessionist minority.
 2. He attributes to coercion the votes in favor of secession.
 3. He referred to the war as a contest or game.
 4. Because these arguments did not depict southern people as the enemy, they should not antagonize people in the border states.

Essential Reading (one of the following):

Roy P. Basler, *Abraham Lincoln: His Speeches and Writings*, pp. 594–609.

Lincoln: Speeches and Writings, vol. 2, pp. 246–261.

Supplementary Reading:

David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln*, pp. 292–294 and chapter 11.

Questions to Consider:

1. What choices did Lincoln make about how to characterize the war?
2. Did Lincoln adequately prepare Congress for the possibility of a lengthy war?

Lecture Twenty-Two

Moving Toward Emancipation

Scope: Having rejected emancipation as a goal of the war, Lincoln now moved toward defending it as a military necessity. But his movement was neither quick nor direct. In a meeting with a delegation of African-Americans, Lincoln urged them to support his policy of colonization—returning free blacks to Africa. He replied to a letter from Horace Greeley on the subject of emancipation. In his 1862 Annual Message, Lincoln again indicated his support for colonization but also suggested that emancipation need not be the calamity it was often presumed to be. Meanwhile, the President was preparing to issue the Emancipation Proclamation. This lecture will examine these three documents of 1862.

Outline

- I. During 1862, Lincoln moved delicately toward emancipation.
 - A. He gradually changed the definition of war aims.
 - 1. The war itself had the effect of radicalizing public opinion.
 - 2. Lincoln was sensitive to the constraints of public opinion that limited his actions.
 - 3. He eventually proposed abolition as a military necessity, thereby remaining consistent with his previous position.
 - B. Lincoln's thought can be traced in a series of rhetorical moves during 1862.
 - 1. He urged a delegation of African-Americans to favor colonization.
 - 2. He rejected Horace Greeley's plea for emancipation, even while he was drafting the Emancipation Proclamation.
 - 3. His Annual Message advocates colonization but opens the door to emancipation.
 - 4. The Emancipation Proclamation is seriously limited in its practical effect but is an important symbol.
- II. Lincoln urged a delegation of African-Americans to favor colonization.
 - A. He stated that equality was not possible even if slavery were ended.
 - 1. The physical difference between the races was the reason.
 - 2. Lincoln is powerless to alter the situation even if he wanted to.
 - 3. For the first time, he states that the presence of African-Americans is described as the ultimate cause of the war.
 - B. Free men (not newly emancipated slaves) should become the leaders of colonization.
 - 1. To do otherwise is selfish.
 - 2. Free blacks should do something for the less fortunate of their own race.
 - 3. Successful colonization might hasten freedom for the slaves.
 - C. Acknowledging blacks' resistance to moving to Liberia, Lincoln proposes a colony in Central America and ends with an almost biblical allusion, looking for one hundred, or fifty, or even twenty-five good people to start this colony.
- III. Lincoln rejected Greeley's publicly published plea for emancipation.
 - A. Greeley urged the President to move toward emancipation as a goal of the war.
 - 1. This goal would inspire support in the North.
 - 2. It would deliver a crushing blow to the rebels.
 - B. Lincoln's answer made clear that his goal was to save the Union, not to preserve or to abolish slavery (unless doing so helped to save the Union).
 - C. At the same time, Lincoln was privately drafting the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation.
 - 1. Military reverses in Virginia caused Lincoln to delay announcing the Emancipation Proclamation.
 - 2. He needed a significant victory; the Battle of Antietam in mid-September, where Lee's northern invasion was stopped, gave him the opportunity.
 - 3. Nonetheless, he still favored colonization.

- IV. Lincoln's 1862 Annual Message opened the door to emancipation.
- A. Most of the message is devoted to other subjects beside slavery or the war.
 - B. Lincoln again urges Congress to favor "compensated emancipation."
 - 1. The land will support only one national family, not two.
 - 2. Disunion is an impossible remedy.
 - 3. Lincoln proposes to compensate states that end slavery by 1900.
 - 4. Lincoln proposes to compensate individuals who free their slaves.
 - 5. He contends that colonization would be less expensive than war, but mentions the fact that Central American countries didn't want to accept colonists and most blacks did not want to go.
 - C. Lincoln's famous peroration refers to colonization, not emancipation.
 - D. Yet Lincoln argues that the objections to emancipation are "largely imaginary, if not sometimes malicious."
 - 1. Freed blacks will not displace white laborers.
 - 2. Freed blacks will not "swarm forth" and outnumber whites.
 - 3. Freed blacks are unlikely to leave the South in any case.
 - E. It is interesting to note that Lincoln's words can speak to us in a context different from that in which they were spoken.
- V. The final Emancipation Proclamation (1 January 1863) downplays its own achievement when viewed as a rhetorical text.
- A. It is devoid of moral exhortation, except to the need for the newly freed slaves to avoid violence.
 - B. It applies only in places where the government is powerless to enforce it.
 - 1. It applied only in states or parts of states that were in rebellion.
 - 2. Lincoln was very specific, even to the point of naming specific parishes in Louisiana.
 - 3. It is a symbolic act, designed to encourage blacks in the South to leave their plantations and defect to the North.
 - 4. It was also aimed at forestalling foreign recognition of the Confederate States.
 - C. It is justified purely in terms of military necessity.

Essential Reading (one of the following):

Roy P. Basler, *Abraham Lincoln: His Speeches and Writings*, pp. 651–653, 666–688, 689–692.

Lincoln: Speeches and Writings, vol. 2, pp. 353–358, 393–415, 424–425.

Supplementary Reading:

David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln*, chapter 13.

Philip Shaw Paludan, *The Presidency of Abraham Lincoln*, chapter 7.

Gabor S. Boritt, *Lincoln the War President*, chapter 3.

James M. McPherson, *Drawn with the Sword*, chapter 13.

Questions to Consider:

- 1. Why did Lincoln continue to support a policy of colonization as late as 1862?
- 2. What was the force of the Emancipation Proclamation, if it applied only where Lincoln was powerless to enforce it?

Lecture Twenty-Three

Lincoln at Gettysburg

Scope: The Gettysburg Address is justifiably regarded as masterful and eloquent. Departing from tradition, it did not depict the battle itself (as had the major address by Edward Everett) but abstracted from the particulars to the larger meaning of the war. By removing the war from its immediate context, Lincoln could articulate principles that would endure long after the guns were stilled, thereby denying his own claim that the world would “little note nor long remember” what he said. This lecture will examine Lincoln’s most well known speech.

Outline

- I. Lincoln’s invitation to Gettysburg reflected the nature of the situation.
 - A. A national cemetery (but owned by the state of Pennsylvania) was being dedicated on 19 November 1863, on the site of the Gettysburg battlefield.
 - B. The principal speech was given by Edward Everett, former president of Harvard and one of the most noted orators in the country.
 - 1. Everett’s speech of just over two hours was a rhetorical reenactment of the battle.
 - 2. It was an excellent speech within the constraints of the genre.
 - C. Lincoln was invited to deliver brief remarks following the main oration.
 - 1. Contrary to the general belief, he didn’t write this speech on the back of an envelope while traveling on the train.
 - 2. The best evidence is that he wrote it in the White House and may have perhaps revised it in Gettysburg before the address.
- II. The Gettysburg address has several distinctive rhetorical features.
 - A. It is a very abstract speech and omits several obvious topics.
 - 1. There is no reference to the battle itself (except the words “what they did here”).
 - 2. There is only brief reference to the significance of the immediate dedicatory occasion.
 - 3. There is no self-reference to Lincoln.
 - B. It acknowledges, but subverts, the generic expectations of the speech.
 - C. It enacts at least two temporal progressions.
 - 1. There is movement from past to present to future.
 - 2. There is movement from conception to birth to dedication to testing.
 - 3. The future is described as a “new birth.”
 - 4. It is a conversion experience, putting the nation on a new mission (cf., to themes of conversion and perfectibility contained in the Temperance Speech discussed in Lecture Three).
 - D. It grounds equality in the Declaration of Independence rather than in any constitutional principle.
 - 1. This move gives Lincoln a more substantial foundation for his views.
 - 2. It makes equality the central “self-evident” truth.
 - 3. It also gives the greatest possible honor to the soldiers who fought for this principle.
 - 4. In the Springfield speech on the *Dred Scott* decision (see Lecture Eight), Lincoln also dealt with the issue of equality as a project, a goal, a proposition.
 - E. The speech employs Biblical, familial, and birth imagery.
 - 1. Biblical—“new birth” and “four-score and seven” echo Scripture.
 - 2. Familial—“our fathers,” while conventional, suggests a family relationship.
 - 3. Birth—“conceived,” “brought forth,” “new birth” are organic birth images.
 - F. Lincoln characterizes the war as a test.
- III. The speech is transformative in impact.
 - A. The pivotal moment is the double meaning of “dedicate.”

- B. The speech moves beyond honoring the dead to creating new tasks for the living.
 - 1. This is a standard eulogistic technique.
 - 2. He doesn't really specify the "great task" remaining.
- C. The speech moves beyond a focus on the nation to a focus on the world.
- D. Because of its emphasis on fundamentals, and by not focusing on what had happened, but rather on what it meant, the speech achieves a timeless quality.

Essential Reading (one of the following):

Roy P. Basler, *Abraham Lincoln: His Speeches and Writings*, pp. 734–737.

Lincoln: Speeches and Writings, vol. 2, p. 536.

Supplementary Reading:

Garry Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg: The Words that Remade America*.

Waldo W. Braden, *Abraham Lincoln, Public Speaker*, chapter 6.

David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln*, chapter 16.

Questions to Consider:

- 1. What did Lincoln accomplish by omitting reference to the details of the battle at Gettysburg? Was this a wise choice?
- 2. Did Lincoln indeed redefine the nature of the country? If so, how did he do that?

Lecture Twenty-Four

Lincoln's Last Speeches

Scope: As he had done at Gettysburg, Lincoln in his Second Inaugural Address focuses on the larger meaning of the war. Although not earlier regarded as a religious man, Lincoln here interprets the carnage and destruction by reference to Biblical precept and divine purpose. This is a speech of reconciliation, but even so it does not assign responsibility equally, because one side “made” and the other “accepted” war. This final lecture will examine Lincoln’s Second Inaugural as his most mature assessment of the war. It also will comment on his final public address, a response to a serenade two days after Robert E. Lee’s surrender at Appomattox.

Outline

- I. Like the Gettysburg Address, Lincoln’s Second Inaugural is brief.
 - A. The first paragraph explains why.
 - 1. It explains that the events of the war are well known.
 - 2. It employs the passive voice.
 - 3. It restrains celebration and offers no prediction.
 - B. The second paragraph compares the situation to that at the First Inaugural and appears to assign blame unequally.
 - 1. The President was devoted to saving the Union; insurgent agents, to destroying it.
 - 2. One side would *make* war; the other would *accept* it.
 - C. The third paragraph names slavery as the cause of the war.
 - 1. This is a contrast from the First Inaugural, in which Lincoln did *not* identify slavery as the cause.
 - 2. Again, responsibility for slavery is divided unevenly between the insurgents and the government.
 - 3. Both are surprised by the length of the war.
 - D. The third paragraph also casts the situation in Biblical terms.
 - 1. Lincoln introduces this thought by saying that both sides pray to the same God.
 - 2. He treats unequally the prayers that the two sides offer.
 - 3. Ultimately, the war can be understood only in the context of God’s purposes, which are unknowable.
 - E. The final paragraph calls for reconciliation.
 - 1. It is an optimistic, idealistic view.
 - 2. It is in tension with the unequal assessment of responsibility in other paragraphs.
 - 3. It gives the speech a transcendent meaning.
 - 4. It provides the necessary degree of atonement.
- II. Lincoln’s last public address was a response to a serenade.
 - A. He again acknowledges God’s role in the outcome.
 - B. Military success makes decisions about reconstruction urgent.
 - 1. Lincoln defends his approach to reconstructing Louisiana.
 - 2. He refuses to answer whether the seceded states really left the Union.
 - C. He expresses a preference for a limited franchise for blacks while acknowledging that this is a matter for the states to decide.
- III. This study of Lincoln’s rhetoric suggests some general conclusions.
 - A. Lincoln was masterful as a public persuader.
 - B. He was skilled at audience analysis and changed his positions very gradually.
 - C. He defended moderation as both a tactic and a political principle.
 - D. His ideas were developed in the crucible of public controversy.
 - E. Examining his rhetoric gives us a window on the evolution of his thought and its adaptation to the audience.

Essential Reading (one of the following):

Roy P. Basler, *Abraham Lincoln: His Speeches and Writings*, pp. 792–793, 796–801.

Lincoln: Speeches and Writings, vol. 2, pp. 686–687, 697–701.

Supplementary Reading:

Waldo W. Braden, *Abraham Lincoln, Public Speaker*, chapter 7.

David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln*, chapter 20.

Questions to Consider:

1. What does Lincoln accomplish by placing the Civil War in a religious context?
2. Does Lincoln's last public address suggest that he would have faced major problems with Congress over reconstruction?

Timeline

| | |
|------------|---|
| 1809 | Born near Hodgenville, Kentucky (February 12) |
| 1816 | Moves to Indiana |
| 1830 | Moves to Illinois |
| 1831 | Leaves his father's house; settles in New Salem |
| 1834 | Elected to Illinois State Legislature for the first of four terms |
| 1837 | Moves to Springfield |
| 1838 | Delivers first major address, the Lyceum Speech |
| 1842 | Marries Mary Todd of Lexington, Kentucky |
| 1846 | Elected to U.S. Congress for session beginning December 1847 |
| 1849 | Returns to Illinois and the practice of law; returns to politics to campaign for candidates opposed to the Kansas-Nebraska Act; becomes a candidate for the U.S. Senate |
| 1856 | Formally becomes a Republican |
| 1857 | Opposes <i>Dred Scott</i> decision |
| 1858 | Nominated for U.S. Senate (June 16); Lincoln-Douglas debates (August 21–October 15) |
| 1859 | Ohio speaking tour |
| 1860 | Cooper Union address (February 27); receives Republican nomination for President; elected President of the United States |
| 1861 | First Inaugural Address; outbreak of the Civil War; calls for enlistment of volunteers |
| 1862 | Prepares Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation; Annual Message supports colonization |
| 1863 | Emancipation Proclamation; Battles of Gettysburg and Vicksburg; Gettysburg Address |
| 1864 | Reelection of Lincoln |
| 1865 | Second Inaugural Address; surrender of Robert E. Lee; assassination (April 14) |

Glossary

Chiasmus: A rhetorical structure in which the climax comes in the middle, with equal emphasis to building up to the climax and moving from the climax.

Colonization: A policy of freeing the slaves and removing them beyond the United States, usually to Africa. Henry Clay was associated with this policy. Lincoln also supported it as late as 1862.

Compromise of 1850: A multiple-part compromise developed originally by Henry Clay and pushed to completion by Stephen A. Douglas. Its principal provisions were: (1) California would enter the Union as a free state, upsetting the balance between free and slave states. (2) In states to be formed from Utah and New Mexico territories (present-day Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada, Utah, and part of Colorado), the decision about slavery would be made by those who lived there. (3) The western boundary of Texas was moved east; in return, the federal government assumed the debt of the Republic of Texas. (4) A strict fugitive slave law was passed. (5) The slave trade, but not slavery itself, was eliminated in the District of Columbia.

Dissociation: A rhetorical device to divide a seemingly unitary concept into two parts, one of which will be rejected and the other preferred. The effect of dissociation is to redefine the previously unitary term.

Dred Scott decision: An 1857 decision of the Supreme Court that had three principal parts: (1) Blacks were not U.S. citizens, so Dred Scott had no standing to sue. (2) Dred Scott's residence in Illinois did not make him free because he subsequently returned to Missouri and hence was bound by the laws of that state. (3) Dred Scott's residence in Minnesota territory did not make him free because Congress had no power to prevent the slaveowner from taking his property there; hence, the Missouri Compromise was unconstitutional.

"Dred Scott II": A hypothetical future Supreme Court decision that Lincoln and others believed would hold that no state had the power to outlaw slavery.

Friendly local legislation: Territorial legislation to protect the property rights of a slaveowner once he brought slaves into the territory. Douglas claimed that territories could exclude slavery, despite the *Dred Scott* decision, by refusing to pass such legislation. Lincoln held that anyone who supported the *Dred Scott* decision would be obliged to support such legislation in order to be consistent with his oath to support the Constitution.

Interrogatories: Questions that Lincoln and Douglas propounded to each other during the course of their debates.

Kansas-Nebraska Act: Created territorial governments for the northern part of the Louisiana Purchase (present-day Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota, North Dakota, and parts of Colorado, Wyoming, and Montana). The Act stated that all decisions about slavery were to be made by the settlers of the territories through their appropriate representatives. This act explicitly repealed the Missouri Compromise.

Know-Nothing: A political party formed in 1854 based on opposition to immigration. Formally called the American Party, it received the nickname of "Know-Nothing" because, when asked about its activities, members replied, "I know nothing."

Lecompton constitution: A proposed state constitution under which Kansas would have entered the Union as a slave state. It included a limited referendum specifically on the slavery clause, but "the constitution without slavery" would have maintained the status of slaves already in the territory. Free-state supporters boycotted this referendum, which carried by about 8 to 1. Meanwhile, the newly elected territorial legislature called for a referendum on the entire document. This vote was boycotted by the slave-state forces and was defeated by about 10 to 1. Congress determined an expedient for obtaining an additional vote, at which the Lecompton constitution was decisively defeated.

Missouri Compromise: Provided that Missouri would enter the Union in 1820 as a slave state and Maine as a free state. In addition, slavery would be prohibited from all territory in the Louisiana Purchase north of latitude 36°30' (the southern boundary of Missouri). South of that line, slavery was permitted but not guaranteed.

Popular sovereignty: The principle that local communities are empowered to regulate their own domestic institutions. Stephen A. Douglas championed this principle as the way to decide the question of slavery in the territories. Lincoln insisted that popular sovereignty had no just application to that issue.

Rhetoric: The study of the available means of persuasion in a given case. Possibilities for persuasion depend on the constraints imposed by the audience and the situation and the opportunities the speaker can find for navigating these constraints.

Spot resolutions: Resolutions introduced by Lincoln during his term in the House of Representatives, calling on President Polk to identify the “spot” of American soil on which he thought American blood had been shed. Polk had used the claim, “American blood has been shed on American soil,” as a justification for the Mexican War.

Squatter sovereignty: Lincoln’s term of ridicule for the principle of popular sovereignty.

Toombs bill: A bill proposed in Congress, but never passed, that would have established procedures by which Kansas would develop a constitution and seek admission as a state. The Toombs bill would have been an alternative to the procedure of the Lecompton constitution.

Wilmot Proviso: A provision stipulating that slavery would be prohibited in any territory acquired as a result of the Mexican War. This provision was repeatedly attached to legislation in the House of Representatives and repeatedly rejected by the Senate. The controversy was resolved with the Compromise of 1850.

Biographical Notes

Benton, Thomas Hart (1782–1858) Missouri politician and former U.S. Senator who favored St. Louis as the eastern terminus for the proposed transcontinental railroad.

Breckinridge, John C. (1821–1875). Vice President of the United States under James Buchanan; Presidential nominee of the southern Democrats in 1860.

Brooks, Preston S. (1819–1858) South Carolina Congressman who attacked Senator Charles Sumner with a cane in response to Sumner's speech, "The Crime Against Kansas." Lincoln quoted Brooks to emphasize that even extreme southerners thought that the Founding Fathers believed that slavery was in the course of ultimate extinction.

Buchanan, James (1791–1868). Fifteenth President of the United States, 1857–1861. A Democrat from Pennsylvania, he had been nominated in 1856 when Stephen A. Douglas released his delegates. In office, Buchanan supported the Lecompton constitution and made it a test of party loyalty, leading Douglas to break with him.

Clay, Henry (1777–1852). A prominent member of the Senate and three-time unsuccessful nominee of the Whig Party for president. Clay is associated prominently with the Missouri Compromise; the Compromise of 1833, which ended the nullification crisis; and the Compromise of 1850, which averted a threat of disunion over the slavery controversy.

Crittenden, John J. (1787–1863). U.S. Senator from Kentucky who was widely regarded as the ideological heir of Henry Clay. A letter from Crittenden endorsing Stephen A. Douglas was released in the closing days of the 1858 campaign.

Douglas, Stephen A. (1813–1861). Lincoln's archrival in Illinois politics, his opponent in the 1858 senate race, and his principal opponent in the north in the 1860 presidential election. Douglas served briefly in the Illinois State legislature and on the Illinois Supreme Court. He was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1843 and served two terms. He served in the U.S. Senate from 1847 until his death. The Chair of the Committee on Territories, he authored the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854. He championed the principle of popular sovereignty even in the aftermath of the *Dred Scott* decision.

Everett, Edward (1794–1865). A recognized clergyman, orator, and statesman. The former president of Harvard University, he was the principal speaker at the dedication of the cemetery at Gettysburg on November 19, 1863.

Fremont, John C. (1813–1890). Western explorer and Republican presidential candidate in 1856. Father-in law of Thomas Hart Benton.

Lincoln, Abraham (1809–1865). Sixteenth President of the United States, 1861–1865. For biographical details, see the timeline.

Lovejoy, Elijah (1802–1837). Presbyterian minister and abolitionist newspaper editor in Alton, Illinois, who was attacked and murdered by a mob.

Matheny, James H. (1818–1890). A political associate of Lincoln's in the Illinois Whig Party. In the Lincoln-Douglas debates, Douglas quoted an 1856 speech from Matheny alleging that Lincoln and Lyman Trumbull had conspired to convert both major political parties to abolitionism.

Pierce, Franklin (1804–1869). Fourteenth President of the United States, 1853–1857. A Democrat who supported the Kansas-Nebraska Act. A vehement critic of Lincoln during the Civil War.

Polk, James K. (1795–1849). Eleventh President of the United States, 1845–1849. A Democrat, Polk was president during the Mexican War. Lincoln alleged that the war was begun unconstitutionally and challenged Polk's justification for war.

Robertson, George. A judge in Lexington, Kentucky, who had acted as counsel for Lincoln in a suit in the late 1840's. Robertson had been a member of Congress at the time of the Missouri Compromise.

Seward, William Henry (1801–1872). Former governor and U.S. Senator from New York, he was the frontrunner for the 1860 Republican nomination. He lost to Lincoln largely because of his reputation in the west as a radical.

Shields, James (1806–1879). U.S. Senator from Illinois, 1849–1854. A Democrat, he sought reelection; Lincoln sought his seat. Eventually both men were defeated by anti-Nebraska Democrat Lyman Trumbull.

Speed, Joshua (1814–1882). A fellow Kentuckian who was one of Lincoln's very few intimate friends.

Taney, Roger B. (1777–1864). Chief Justice of the United States, appointed by Andrew Jackson. Taney is most known for his authorship of the *Dred Scott* decision.

Trumbull, Lyman (1813–1896). Elected to the U.S. Senate in 1855 as an anti-Nebraska Democrat. Subsequently, he became a Republican and campaigned for Lincoln in the 1858 senate election. A political associate of Lincoln's.

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Holzer, Harold, ed. *The Lincoln-Douglas Debates: The First Complete, Unexpurgated Text*. New York: HarperCollins, 1993. Transcripts of the seven debates, taking Lincoln's speeches from a Democratic paper and Douglas's from a Republican paper. In general these transcripts are less polished than those in the Angle collection.

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